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PHD

BUILDING STABILITY OVERSEAS: WHY IS GETTING UPSTREAM DIFFICULT? AN EXAMINATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT POLICY (2010–2015)

Johnstone, Andrew

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BUILDING STABILITY OVERSEAS:
WHY IS GETTING UPSTREAM DIFFICULT?
AN EXAMINATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT POLICY (2010–2015)

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Social and Policy Sciences

8 January 2021

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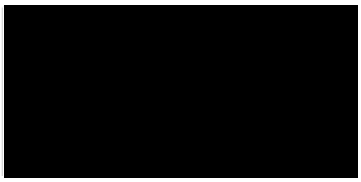
I am the author of this thesis, and the work described therein was carried out by myself personally.



Candidate's signature

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Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
BSOS	Building Stability Overseas Strategy
Con	Conservative
CP	Conflict Prevention
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DAC	Development Cooperation Directorate (of the OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict Affected States
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FS	Fragile States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GOS	Government of Sudan
GOSS	Government of South Sudan
HDI	Human Development Index
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
IC	International Community
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ID Committee	House of Commons International Development Committee
IDPS	International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IGO	Inter-governmental Organisations
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMATT	International Military Assistance and Training Team
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisations
IO	International Organisation
IP-SSJ	Integrated Programme for Strengthening Security and Justice (in Nepal)
JACS	Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission (of the UN/WB in South Sudan)
Joint Committee NSS	Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy
Lab	Labour

LD	Liberal Democrat
LSE	London School of Economics
MAR	Multilateral Aid Review
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NCP	National Congress Party of Sudan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Co-operation and Development
OECD DAC	OECD Development Co-operation Directorate
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PSGs	Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals
RCDS	Royal College of Defence Studies
RtoP/R2P	Responsibility to Protect
S&J	Security and Justice
SDSR	Strategic Security and Defence Review
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specificity, Measurability, Achievability, Relevance, Time-bound
SPLA	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement
SSCC	South Sudan Council of Churches
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force
SSDTP	South Sudan Security and Defence Transformation Programme
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
US	United States of America
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WB	World Bank

Abstract

There have been periodic calls for the international community to do better at preventing violent conflict. Coming out of the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, the UK Coalition government (2010–2015) published their Building Stability Overseas Strategy, in which "investing in upstream prevention" featured prominently. Existing research on structural conflict prevention has focused on conceptual debates with relatively few studies examining the operationalisation of conflict prevention policy.

Drawing on policy theory this thesis examines the process under which politicians sought to turn political intent about conflict prevention into action. The research examines policy and programme documents issued by the FCO, DFID and MOD and examined Hansard and Parliamentary committee reports in order to trace the initial intent through parliamentary scrutiny and departmental policy development. By examining two policy implementation studies – South Sudan and Nepal – the research reviews what officials were seeking to do in target states.

This thesis found that "upstream"[1] conflict prevention is fundamentally a political process in which international partners can contribute through politically driven strategies and policies supported by other activities and projects to prevent the outbreak, escalation or relapse of large-scale violent conflict between or within states. The Coalition government's policy, however, never got beyond normative policy statements and broad intentions. This thesis found that this failure was partly due to the inability of politicians to find the time and effort to drive the long-term political nature of structural conflict prevention when faced with more pressing immediate issues that directly impacted the security and economic well-being of the UK. Departmental officials sought to develop and execute the "upstream" policy intent but their approach was focused primarily through statebuilding programmes and projects. In the policy implementation studies of South Sudan and Nepal, it is argued that it was local street-level bureaucrats who were developing and executing policy, not always in concert with local elites. Furthermore, there was a short window of opportunity for structural conflict prevention policy to develop but there was a lack of departmental leadership, experience or policies ready to be drawn upon. Instead, junior officials and contractors sought to muddle through as best they could with the resources available.

This thesis found that UK politics prevented any strategic focus on "upstream" prevention to turn intent into a coherent government approach. This was compounded by structural conflict prevention not being differentiated from statebuilding. Nor were the local conditions for UK officials within target countries created politically for them to deliver the desired goals. This thesis therefore contributes to the literature; it highlights some of the factors that make structural conflict prevention hard to implement. The thesis also has relevance for peacebuilding and statebuilding activities conducted by donor country officials and NGOs. Finally, this thesis has wider implications for policy and any future attempt at the development of a structural conflict prevention policy by a donor government – and for any subsequent policy execution.

[1] The description of "upstream" comes directly from the UK Coalition government's policy document.

Forward

This research drew on my personal experience serving as a military officer in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Afghanistan. As a military officer, with visibility of both the military and political strategic level, I had seen at first hand the significant impact that well executed operations, programmes and projects could make on communities as part of a wider approach to stabilisation, peace and statebuilding and conflict prevention. However, also I had experienced at first hand of institutional statebuilding programmes that were both inappropriately conceived and failures. There were also approaches that resulted in outputs but not outcomes for communities and were unsustainable in the longer term. Hence, my experiences had initially led to a focus in this research on why some strategies, programmes and projects were successful in contributing to conflict prevention and why others failed.

My background resulted initially in a technical approach that reflected much of my experiences, as, by and large I had been involved in developing and executing strategies, programmes and projects within a given political context. However, the experience of this research has caused me to reflect more on the political positioning of my work, much of which happened broadly around and above me, albeit with a high degree of visibility. This political positioning impacted the success or failure of much of the efforts of those on the ground. This reflection on wider political positioning resulted from a combination of referencing policy theory to what had happened and interviews with senior politicians, civil servants and NGO policy directors. It became more apparent to me that within departments lessons were being learnt at a programme and project level but not necessarily at a politico-strategic level.

In conducting this research, I was also conscious of my own positionality regarding both the overall research question and interaction with interviewees. Having had a career in the military and having been involved in conflict, post-conflict and conflict prevention operations in the UK, Africa and Afghanistan, there was a risk of a conflict of interest between my own impartiality and objectiveness and the way the research was approached. Certainly, my ideas have been shaped by operational experience but my understanding of international development and the challenges from a political, economic and social perspective have been enhanced by preliminary academic work through the International Development Masters Programme and study of policy theory. Being aware of the issue of objectivity has enabled academic rigour and an evidence-based approach in the development of the final conclusions.

Chapter 1– The national and international context of conflict prevention

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Conflict prevention and the Coalition government's intent

Following the publication of the UK Coalition government's strategic defence and security review in 2010, the Coalition government presented the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) to Parliament in July 2011. This publication came at the same time as an academic debate regarding the effectiveness and the cost/benefit of interventions (Chalmers, 2007, Duffield, 2009, Daddow, 2009, Daddow and Schnapper, 2013, Teuten and Korski, 2010). William Hague, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, wrote that the strategy "sets out clear, achievable proposals for how we can improve the way we identify, prevent and end instability and conflict overseas" (Hansard, 2011a, Vol 531, Col 98WS). Hague went on to describe the use of "diplomatic, development, defence and security tools" building on "Britain's experience, relationships, reputation and values" (Hansard, 2011a, Vol 531, Col 98WS). In his written statement to Parliament Hague (2011) sets out three mutually supporting pillars of early warning, rapid crisis prevention and response, and investment in upstream prevention; it is this last pillar of investment in upstream prevention that is the focus of this research. Noting the three signatures on the BSOS strategy (secretaries of state for FCO, DFID and MOD), months earlier, the Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, had told the Royal College of Defence Studies that development was "at the heart of an integrated approach" protecting the world's most vulnerable and protecting Britain from external threats in which the UK's "upstream offer on conflict prevention must be as good as the one we have honed for 'downstream' during and in the aftermath of war" (Mitchell, 2010).

1.1.2 Research Question

As will be seen from Chapter 2 much of the recent (10 years+) academic research relating to conflict prevention has been focused on period after conflict and the prevention of a return to recent conflict. The discourse has many parallels with the literature on post-conflict stabilisation, peacebuilding and statebuilding. But, as this research will demonstrate, being successful in structural conflict prevention and getting upstream of the violence also has its own unique challenges. Hence, this research seeks to fill a gap in the scholarly literature that examines the way the Coalition government's structural conflict prevention[2] policy was followed through from the initial statements of intent of government through to departmental policy development, and subsequently in execution in target countries with local and other international partners. This research seeks to understand why, as with previous efforts by the international community, the Coalition government's intent to improve upstream conflict development policy development and policy execution may not have been as successful as was hoped. In doing so this research sheds light on how policy is developed and executed for structural conflict prevention. This in turn helps explain some of the issues encountered in policy execution by government departments and its partners. The research question is:

> During the 2010–2015 Coalition government, why has the UK found it difficult to implement effective structural conflict prevention policies and programmes to counter instability and fragility?

[2] Structural conflict prevention is described and defined later in this chapter.

The primary focus and contribution of this research is on the translation of the political intent of the Coalition government, that is set out in the BSOS, into policy and action; as such the focus of attention of this research is mainly on what was happening in Whitehall in the period of the Coalition government. In the past, the UK, as part of an international response, has found it difficult to intervene sufficiently early to prevent countries descending into large-scale violence. The last 30 years has seen a significant number of international interventions in conflicts. Yet in recent decades there have been a number of international reports extoling the need to do better at conflict prevention. The most recent has been a report published by the World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict (World Bank and United Nations, 2018)*. Intervention has more often been after large-scale violence has erupted and then extends into stabilisation, peacebuilding and statebuilding to prevent the return to violence. Also, as will be seen in Chapter 2, the academic research has tended to follow the international focus on interventions resulting in a wide literature on the impact of interventions, protection, peacebuilding and statebuilding, both conceptual and empirical. However, as will be seen, the academic literature is light on analysing conflict prevention from a conceptual perspective and, even more so, from an empirical perspective.

This thesis contributes to the gap in literature on conflict prevention at the earliest stages of intervention before widespread violent conflict. It does so from the perspective of a donor nation whose government set out with a specific intent to do better at upstream conflict prevention. How policy emerged and was subsequently developed and executed can say much about the potential success, or otherwise, of the outcome of the UK government's efforts.

1.1.3 Structure of the chapter

Having set out the objective and structure of this thesis, this chapter places the concept of conflict prevention within an international and national (UK) context. The chapter addresses the nature of conflict prevention and includes a definition used throughout this thesis. The chapter then assesses the international context to the formation of the Coalition government political intent and policy. Also, the chapter positions the Coalition government's response within a wider international response. Finally, the chapter sets out the theoretical approach to the research which draws upon policy theory to assist in understanding how policy emerged and developed. Policy theory has been used to shed light on Whitehall policy development and the efforts of in-country teams to influence, support or implement policies and programmes in support of structural conflict prevention.

1.2 Understanding the concept of conflict prevention

The term conflict prevention is widely used but it can mean many things relating to pre-violent conflict, during conflict or post-conflict (see para 1.3.2). The BSOS third pillar specifically sets out to address medium- to longer-term conflict prevention but it does not address with any degree of clarity whether it is reference to pre-conflict or post-conflict; but the emphasis is firmly on the UK government's policies for investment upstream to build the institutions in fragile countries so that they can manage "tensions and shocks" (HMG, 2011, p2).

The OECD and Carnegie Commission (1997) provide more useful views of conflict prevention. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict took the view that "early action requires early detection and skilled analysis of developing trends. In addition, leaders and governments will need to formulate clear statements of interest, develop measured, pragmatic courses of action to respond to the warning signs, and provide support for locally sustainable solutions" (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997, p xviii). The Commission was emphasising the political nature of prevention and took the view that "preventing deadly conflict is possible" (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997, p xvii). The issue for the Commission was the lack of international community commitment to the concept of prevention and the habit of preventative investment. But this report pre-dated 9/11, which had a profound impact on conflict prevention as the conflict prevention focus, particularly of northern developed nations, was to become the global war on terrorism.

The OECD usefully splits prevention in their report *Encouraging Effective Evaluation Of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities* (OECD DAC, 2007). Drawing on academic papers and the Carnegie Commission's definitions of conflict prevention, it sought to define the difference between "'operational prevention', which usually entails some form of crisis intervention, and 'structural prevention', which aims at transforming key social/economic/political factors that, if left unaddressed, could lead to violent conflict in the future" (OECD DAC, 2007, p22). The terms are summarised in Table 1.1. As with the ICISS report, the OECD DAC report was again very general in identifying conflict prevention in very broad terms and again identified the issue of the challenges to existing power structures when attempting conflict prevention.

Table 1.1 – Operational and structural prevention.

Factors	Operational prevention	Structural prevention
Timeframe	Urgent, crisis-oriented	Longer term
Actors	Diplomats (bilateral and multilateral), military, civil society, international organisations	Wide range of potential actors: multilateral, governmental, civil society
Approaches & Tools	Crisis intervention; quiet diplomacy; political pressure; threats of military intervention or economic sanctions; dialogue and negotiation between conflicting parties	Democratic institution-building; relationship-building; prejudice reduction; power-sharing arrangements; reduction of social and economic inequalities; promotion of rule of law; security sector reform; education; etc.

Source: OECD DAC, 2007, Table 1.2, p22.

As will be seen in Chapter 2, scholars have also addressed the nature of conflict prevention. Reflecting on the challenges facing the UN and the Carnegie Commission's conceptualisation, Rubin and Jones (2007) took the operational and structural construct and developed their own interpretation of the issues. Noting that "it is difficult to distinguish prevention from other types of peace operation", Rubin and Jones commented that most post-conflict peacebuilding operations are in fact "*post agreement*, and these agreements provide a mandate for the UN and other international actors" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p393). Such operations, Rubin and Jones argued, aim to "prevent further action" but they argued, "where there is no agreement and no specific mandate for the international community" and where access must be "painstakingly negotiated … this is the category of preventive action" which requires not just tools and capabilities but more fundamentally agreement on what is

to be prevented (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p393). Rubin and Jones also noted that interstate conflict prevention is the "core mission" of the UN, but that it was becoming increasingly involved in intrastate conflicts which "is the most controversial part of preventive action by the UN because it entails direct involvement in the internal affairs of a state" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p394).

On structural prevention Rubin and Jones noted that it consists of "measures to decrease the risk of conflict in particular spaces (states or regions)" and "measures to help countries and regions break free of the mutually reinforcing equilibrium of poverty and violent conflict" with measures including "strengthening institutions; target key institutional problems (managing natural resource income, transforming illegal and informal economies, building state institutions); alleviating certain types of inequality; targeting youth unemployment, regional conflict, arms trading drugs and so forth" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p400/401). A key issue articulated by Rubin and Jones, that will crop up in Parliament during debate of the UK's conflict prevention policy, was that once one focuses on the root causes of conflict "virtually anything that the UN does can be rehatted as conflict prevention in order to show conformity to the new mandate or appeal to certain donors" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p401). Rubin and Jones suggest that for structural conflict prevention the aim should be for "*risk reduction* through sound governance and institution building, including public financial accountability, natural resource rent management, social policies, and incorporation of both informal and illegal sectors" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p401). Commenting on the UN approach to conflict prevention, Rubin and Jones suggest that, notwithstanding the efforts of the Secretary General, "the UN system as a whole has lacked a well-defined strategic goal in the field of prevention. It could define such a goal as lowering the global prevalence of violent conflict … by halving the number of civil wars within a given time" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p403-4); their views on the effectiveness of key levers of structural conflict prevention will be examined in Chapter 2.

An alternative approach to structural conflict prevention is offered by earlier work by Lund. In Lund's *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Lund, 1996) he distinguishes between different types of preventive intervention and his focus is on *preventive diplomacy* (following what he describes as the language in the tradition of Hammarskjöld-Butros-Ghali in the. terminology). Lund defines preventive diplomacy as:

> Action taken in vulnerable place and times to avoid the threat or use of armed conflict and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle the political disputes that can arise from the destabilizing effects of economic, social political, and international change" with possible actions ranging from "political, military economic, and other instruments" carried out by governments, multilateral organizations, NGOs, individuals, or the disputants themselves (Lund, 1996, p37).

Lund further differentiated preventive diplomacy from normal peacetime relations and crisis management and listed a toolbox of preventative diplomacy actions. In a later work Lund noted that conflict prevention had been tried and succeeded and gave examples including South Africa, [North] Macedonia, the Baltics and the South China Seas. Lund noted that one study by Wallensteen and Moller (2003) found that third-party intervention had prevented armed conflict in 47 disputes and that conflict prevention was not just a "high ideal, but a prudent option that sometimes works"

before going on to complain that international actors "show little interest in building on recent accomplishments to reduce the current risks" (Lund, 2009, p287-8). As will be seen in Chapter 2, the discourse on preventative diplomacy, contemporary to the policy initiatives of the Coalition government, were somewhat limited; the main focus of the discourse was on the liberal peacebuilding and stabilisation.

Drawing on the work outlined above and as a result of research and discussions with interviewees during the course of this research, this thesis developed a definition of conflict prevention based on prior work by Pérez-Niño and Walton (2010); their definition of conflict prevention has been taken and adjusted to emphasise that conflict prevention is a politically driven "process" in which technical programmes and projects have a place in supporting that process. The definition used in this thesis proposes that:

> Conflict prevention is a process, locally owned, in which the international community partners can contribute, through politically driven strategies and policies at the macro-level, and activities and projects at the micro-level, to prevent the outbreak, escalation or relapse of large-scale violent conflict between or within states. It includes long-, medium- and short-term actions that aim to address the underlying causes of violence or its more immediate triggers.

1.3 Fragile states and the relationship with conflict prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding and statebuilding

In this section the nature of fragile states and the link with international interventions is discussed as these are concepts and ideas that will be referred to throughout this thesis.

1.3.1 Fragile states and states of fragility

The term fragile state has been widely used and continues to be used primarily by politicians, commentators and in official policy documents and publications of the period. However, the term fragile state is both vague and fails to differentiate the reason for a perceived state of fragility. In the last 10 years much of the focus in official circles has been on those states where fragile institutions have led to internal conflict, civil wars and breeding grounds for primarily Islamic terrorism. This focus has long been contentious but reflects much of the conflict-security-development nexus that has shaped the activities of northern governments in particular.

More recently the debate has opened somewhat; in 2015 the OECD, in its annual report on fragile states, made a conscious move from the term "fragile states" to "states of fragility". The OECD analysed some 50 countries in terms of five categories of fragility: violence; access to justice, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, economic foundations, and capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters. However, even this breakdown of fragility leaves open questions of what is, for example, driving violence – it could be the interventionalist actions of northern states (e.g. Iraq in 2003). Notwithstanding such limitations this initiative was extended into a project led by the OECD to re-define fragility. Indeed, at the Fragility Forum 2016, World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim entered the debate commenting that "we now have to admit that the paradigms

and frameworks that have guided our perspective on fragility and conflict may be less relevant than we had hoped" (World Bank, 2016, p1). Jim Yong Kim noted the need to rethink collective responses to fragility and conflict as "fragility is no longer mostly limited to low-income states" (World Bank, 2016, p1); he questioned how the international community effectively operated in middle-income countries that are experiencing conflict and violence, or the spillovers from conflict. These are welcome moves by the OECD and the World Bank as it allows for a more tailored view of the issues faced by some of the 50 poorest and unstable states and also highlights the dangers of middle-income states under stress falling into instability and thus allowing better targeting of interventions (and understanding of the needs of interventions). However, notwithstanding the recent developments led by the OECD, the term fragile states will continue to be used in this thesis as it reflects the language of the period under review. For example, when using the term fragile states and upstream it will be in the context of the language and writings of government, politicians and other organisations and commentators.

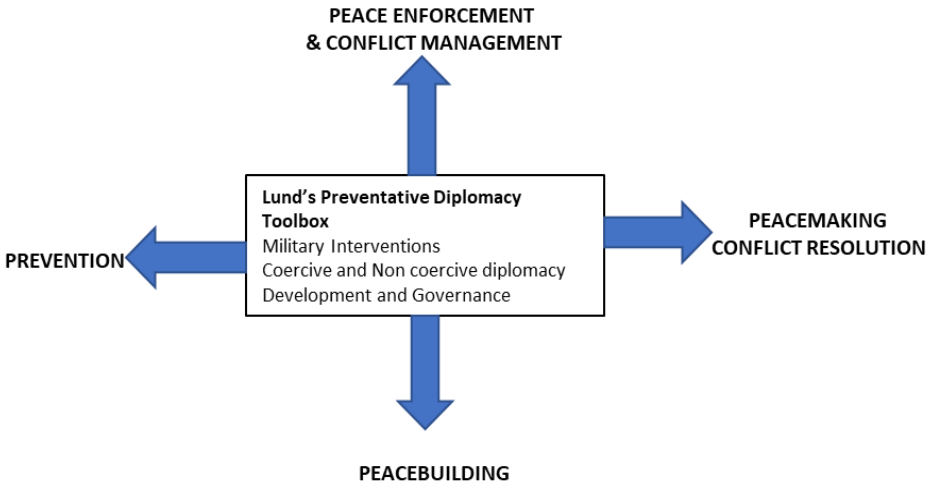
1.3.2 Stabilisation, peacebuilding, statebuilding, structural conflict prevention and development.

Notwithstanding the discussion above clarifying the meaning conflict prevention, for the purposes of this thesis there remains a degree of potential confusion with other widely used terms – specifically the relationship with stabilisation, peacebuilding, statebuilding and development. Figures 1.1 – 1.3 represents the relationship and overlap between peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Figure 1.1 places conflict prevention in time as it is not unusual, over decades, to observe a cycle of violence, conflict transformation, social change, conflict formulation and a return to violence. Also, Figure 1.1 indicates the way in which the international community has tended to intervene (in capitals). Figure 1.2 represents the complexity of international responses. This representation is typical of others produced by international organisations and academics and links to the point made by Ruben and Jones that many interventions are post agreement (be it a ceasefire, a peace agreement; or an agreement for a UN mission to intervene). Note that in this thesis conflict prevention is a predominantly political process that can take part either pre- or post-large-scale violence and overlaps with peacebuilding, statebuilding and development activities. The issue of conflict prevention as a pre- and post-conflict activity is addressed in Chapter 2. Figure 1.3 draws on Lund's 1996 work where he set out in detail a toolbox of interventions for preventative diplomacy. However, a detailed examination of Lund's toolbox (Lund, 1996, pp203-205) quickly identifies that it is the same toolbox as NATO's Comprehensive Approach (see below) to intervention. The toolbox also reflects Hague's diplomatic, development, defence and security tools. The difference is how these tools are used in different phases of the cycle of conflict. This is an important observation as it suggests that the international community has the tools to engage in conflict prevention, but the tools are not being used or used effectively for conflict prevention. Why the tools are not used for conflict prevention has not been adequately addressed in the literature, and it is this link that is explored in this thesis through an analysis of the UK Coalition government's intent, policy development and policy execution.

Figure 1.1 – The relationship between conflict prevention stabilisation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, statebuilding and development (Melander and Pigache, 2007)

Figure 1.2 – Overlaps between stabilisation and other policy spheres drawing on the work of Lund and Collinson et al. (Collinson et al., 2010, p S283, Lund, 1996, p38)

Figure 1.3 – Lund's toolbox for preventative diplomacy (Lund, 1996, p 203) and applicability to other phases of intervention



Structural conflict prevention must be seen as a medium- to long-term activity where there is an opportunity to stabilise a situation before it descends into the chaos of armed conflict – or post conflict during reconstruction. Structural conflict prevention does not preclude the deployment of UN or other forces as part of a stabilisation operation – which is likely to require political, institutional, social, economic and security support mechanisms. Structural conflict prevention might involve a peace agreement or at least a relatively stable situation that allows the possibility of structural conflict prevention. The term upstream, used in the BSOS and by some politicians, indicates a period before a situation descends into chaos and deadly force becomes the dominant tactic of conflict resolution.

As for the UK and, dating from the 2003 establishment of the UK government Conflict Prevention Pool (of resources), the language of "conflict prevention" seems less well represented in both literature and policy. This tends to reinforce the perception of a heavier focus on conflict resolution rather than conflict prevention. Yet conflict prevention is (and has been) central to UK government policy for over a decade. Unsurprisingly, given the involvement in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria/Iraq, the UK government focus has not been on conflict prevention. This is also reflected in the MOD language of a "comprehensive approach" to addressing ongoing violent conflict. But in its definition and usage, the comprehensive approach emerged in the language of NATO and the UK around 2008 and remains a pejorative term, although arguably it is a reference to a whole-of-government approach. But the military, with their focus over the past 20 years on intervention and their own limitations in achieving satisfactory results without the input of effective governance and development, have been less obvious in supporting a comprehensive approach in conflict prevention. One commentator has noted that while the comprehensive approach was "valid conceptually, the UK's comprehensive approach lacked viable and reliable foundations that should have been provided by a sound strategic policy planning process, in turn enhanced by a genuinely cross-government engagement" (Soria, 2011, p46). More recently the language has shifted to an emphasis on stabilisation and this has become the main effort of the Stabilisation Unit, albeit at one time, as will be seen, the Stabilisation Unit was to be at the forefront of conflict prevention.

As will be seen in Chapter 2, since the turn of the century academic research has focused heavily on "peacebuilding" and "statebuilding" within a now more contested "liberal peace" agenda. The language of peacebuilding and statebuilding, and the heavy focus on UN and northern interventions, again has tended to focus on those states that have experienced violent conflict and some form of military intervention even though peacebuilding and statebuilding could have been applied to situations of structural conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Academic research seems to have focused on the practice of interventions (both military intervention and development aid) rather than looking more broadly at the issue of conflict resolution before violence. This has meant that there has been less of a contribution to the practical issues facing politicians and officials in the development of conflict prevention policy and practice. Furthermore, there is clearly an overlap between UK poverty reduction activities and activities that are targeted at structural conflict prevention. As will be seen the 2010 Bilateral Aid Review (BAR) has refocused UK efforts to 27 states. Given the link between poverty reduction and conflict prevention, and the 27 states targeted in the 2010 BAR, a view will be taken of those in which structural conflict prevention actions might have been required.

In all, conflict prevention, be it pre- or post-large-scale violence, together with stabilisation and reconstruction, are difficult and often long-term activities that arguably require strong leadership, clarity of purpose, international cooperation and resilience. This is necessary to overcome political setbacks, programme failures and controversies that will inevitably be associated with a sustainable process of stabilising a fragile state. Hence, this thesis will look closely at what was said by politicians and officials, what was done and how well the UK actually did in turning high-level, value-laden policy into long-term sustainable political strategies supported by programmes and projects to assist states from descending into violence.

1.4 The international context of conflict prevention

This research is set within an international context of failed efforts to address conflicts before they descend into large-scale violence. Below is a brief summary of the wicked problem of preventing violent conflict that the international community has faced for a wide variety of reasons. Each conflict is unique but over the past 30 years there has been a constant return to the issue of how the international community can do better at resolving conflict before it descends into violence. Before outlining the international efforts, it is worth recalling the very nature of wicked problems which are so complex and dependent on so many factors, possibly involving multiple actors with different goals and perspectives, and hence it is hard to grasp what exactly the problem is, or how to tackle it.

The concept of wicked that emerged in 1973 (Webber and Rittel (1973), is well suited to the problems associated with conflict prevention and public policy. Webber and Rittel identified[3] ten characteristics of wicked problems (Head, 2008, p 102). Head (2008) developed the ideas of Webb and Rittel in relation to public policy, commenting that public management responses to complexity and uncertainty seem to be inadequate. In his 2008 paper, Head noted that "at an international level, there are many policy areas marked by wicked problems" and gave an example of "peace settlements in divided societies" quoting the Middle East and the Balkan states as examples (Head, 2008, p 107). Reviewing progress on public policy in dealing with wicked problems in 2018, Head (2018) argued that, after four decades of policy analysis and experience, there is "better understandings of how policy problems evolve and how debates are shaped around issues and solutions", and how to "develop more effective policy responses" (Head, 2018, p 2). Head further comments that insights into wicked problems are "increasingly being applied in complex policy areas characterized by conflicts and uncertainties, emerging crises and political complexity" (Head, 2018, p 2). While this may be the case, in the context of structural (upstream) conflict prevention this thesis will argue that, based on the experience of the UK, there is still some way to go in developing adequate responses let alone putting those responses into action.

[3] Webber and Rittel – Ten primary characteristics of wicked problems: (1) There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem, i.e. even the definition and scope of the problem is contested; (2) Wicked problems have no 'stopping rule', i.e. no definitive solution; (3) Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad in the eyes of stakeholders; (4) There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem; (5) Every (attempted) solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; the results cannot be readily undone, and there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error; (6) Wicked problems do not have a clear set of potential solutions, nor is there a well described set of permissible operations to be incorporated into the plan; (7) Every wicked problem is essentially unique; (8) Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem; (9) The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways; (10) The planner has no 'right to be wrong', i.e. there is no public tolerance of initiatives or experiments that fail.

1.4.1 International efforts: the dilemma of prevent and protect.

Examining the recent history of international reports, one gets a view of the dilemma of the international community in seeking to prevent conflict and to protect the innocent when conflict breaks out. Article 1 of the UN Charter makes clear that the purpose of the UN is to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace. Despite an increase in UN operations to address conflict since end of Cold War[4] there has been few examples of early international community engagement that has clearly prevented a descent into violence. Since the end of the Cold War and the increase in UN interventions, there have been several reports all with a common theme; how does the UN and the international community do better at addressing conflict within and between states. Some reports focus on the performance of UN interventions to address conflict, but other reports address the more fundamental issue of how to prevent the outbreak of large-scale violence in the first place.

Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* report set a new tone for international relations, albeit noting that the state was the "foundation-stone of the [UN] organization" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, para 17). Boutros-Ghali (1992) called for the retention of the new collegiality of the Security Council to tackle global issues and recommended preventative diplomacy, and if necessary, preventative deployments of a United Nations presence, to reduce the risk of inter-state conflict, with the right of the UN to intervene under Chapter VII (the use of force) to resolve international conflict if necessary.

The 1994 UN Human Development Report (1994) is also often quoted as a key reference point. This report sought to define: "a new concept of human security" that focused on people not just states; it proposed a "new development paradigm that puts people at the centre of development" with a particular focus on the improvement of the status of women. This led to the 1999 *UN Security Council Resolution 1265 – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* and three other resolutions by 2006, all of which focused on protection in conflict. There were UN successes often quoted as Cambodia (1992/93), Guatemala (1997), Sierra Leone (1999–2005) and East Timor (1999–2005; 2006–12). However, notable UN failures include Rwanda (1993/94) and the early years of the deployment in former Yugoslavia (1992–95).

The failures to prevent large-scale violence led to two influential reports. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1997) that explored ways to prevent deadly conflict and in which governments, intergovernmental organisations, and NGOs might build favourable conditions for peaceful coexistence. Probably the most significant contemporary start point to conflict prevention is the post-Rwanda investigations of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty from 2001. Its report, *Responsibility to Protect* (2001), identified three aspects of the responsibility to protect: prevent, react and rebuild. The ICISS stated that:

> Prevention is the single most important dimension of the responsibility to protect: prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is

[4] In the period 1981–1994 the use of UN military operations increased significantly. During the Cold War only 13 UN peacekeeping operations had been launched but, in the 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the UN Security Council sanctioned: 16 operations in 13 countries in Africa; 7 operations in in 5 countries in South America; 5 operations in 3 countries in Asia; 9 operations in 7 countries in Europe; and finally, just one operation in the Middle East. A total of 38 operations conducted in 30 countries.

> contemplated, and more commitment and resources must be devoted to it (ICISS, 2001, p xi).

The ICISS focused in a very broad way on a "direct prevention 'toolbox' … [which covered] – political/diplomatic, economic, legal and military" approaches to conflict prevention (ICISS, 2001, p23). However, for a range of reasons, mainly political, the UN was to take an arguably narrower view of the Commission's ideas. In 2001, the Secretary General issued *Prevention of Armed Conflict* (Sec Gen UN, 2001) which was generally welcomed and resulted in a supportive 2003 UN General Assembly Resolution (2003). Also, the outcome resolution of the UN World Summit (2005) in 2005 noted the responsibility of each state to protect it population "from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" and the wider responsibility of the "international community, through the United Nations,… to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (General Assembly UN, 2005, Para 138/139) through Security Council Chapter VII collective action (i.e. the use of force) on a case-by-case basis.

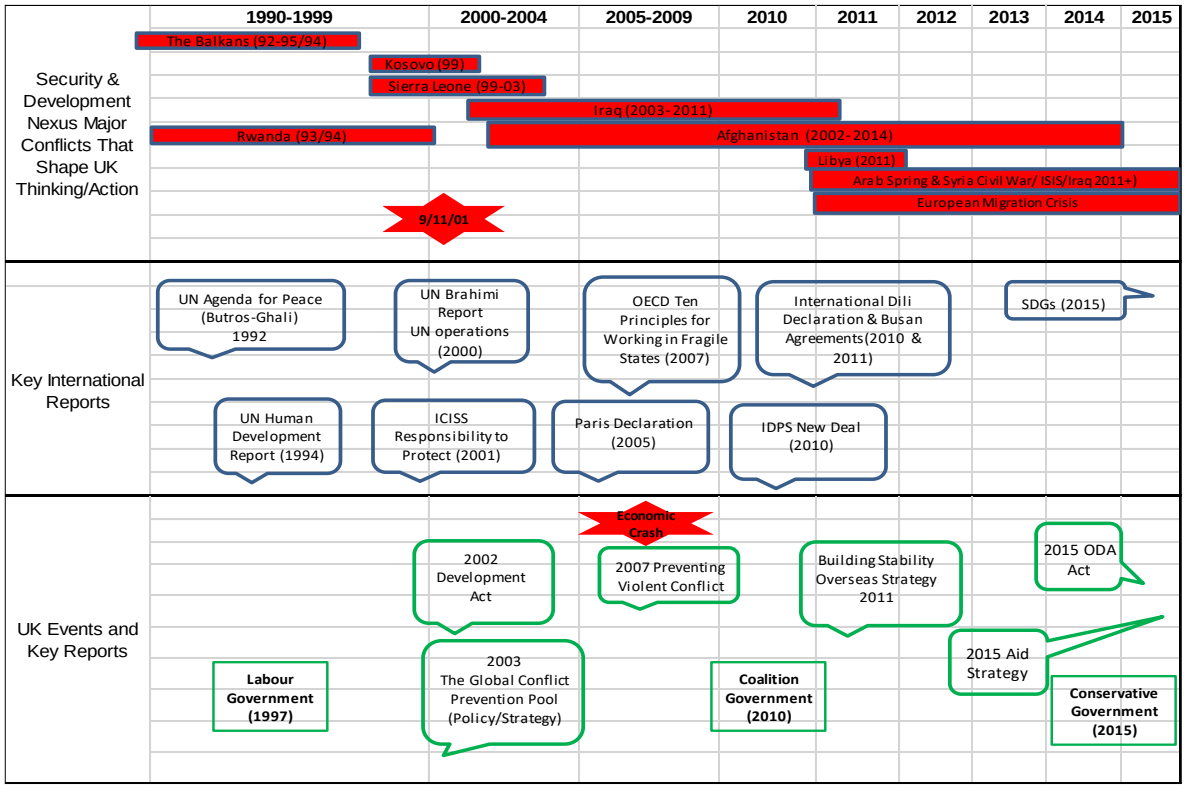
In 2009 the Secretary General went on to issue a further report *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect* (Sec Gen UN, 2009); at this point it is worth noting the time delay between the 2001 initial report and the implementation report which in itself is an indication of the timeframe of international action. In his second report the Secretary General adopted "a 'narrow but deep' approach: narrow in its focus on the prevention of four crimes (genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity) and protection from them, but deep in its ambition to employ all instruments available to the UN system" (Bellamy, 2013, p12). Keeping in mind the narrow focus of the UN approach to responsibility to protect, the strategy proposed was built around three mutually supporting pillars: the protection responsibilities of the state; international assistance and capacity-building; and timely and decisive response. The first pillar is particularly important in the context of prevention of conflict as it places the onus of leadership firmly on the state at risk.

Notwithstanding its narrow interpretation, Responsibility to Protect (RtoP gathered a degree of momentum with for example: increased UN focus on early warning; the appointment of UN Special Advisors at Assistant Secretary General level for RtoP; and the encouragement of the appointment of national RtoP focal points amongst other strengthening mechanisms. By the end of 2009 the Security Council had taken its position on RtoP, issuing UNSCR Resolution 1894 (2009) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict; it noted the Secretary General's report, welcoming its proposals, demands action by states to comply with international agreements and its willingness to respond if necessary "where civilians are being targeted or humanitarian assistance to civilians is being deliberately obstructed" (Security Council UN, 2009, p3). However, while RtoP was to be cited in Security Council resolutions (e.g. Libya and Syria), the politics of the UN and the Security Council continued to be a major obstacle to affirmative and effective preventative action on the RtoP.

Leading up to the period of the Coalition government, there were a number of key milestones in the development of international agreements and frameworks for conflict prevention and working in fragile and conflict affected states. These include: the 2005 Paris

Declaration; the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action; the 2010 Dili Declaration; and the 2011 Busan New Deal that was signed up to by the Coalition government. These are examined below. A summary of key events and milestones is at Figure 1.4 and shows the linkage between major conflicts and the emergence of international and UK policy responses.

Figure 1.4 – 1992–2015 contextual overview



1.4.2 A development approach: the Paris Agreement of 2005 and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action

While the efforts of the Security Council were on violent conflict, and in no way ignoring the role of the agencies of the UN, efforts to prevent conflict and build stable states also were being addressed from an international development community perspective. But this agenda once again tends to focus on building states and institutions. This issues is also reflected in the academic debate and, as will be seen in Chapter 2, a key issue that emerges is the balance between addressing political issues relating to conflict or the potential for violent conflict and technical issues associated with state institutions and governance.

The 2005 Paris Declaration (OECD, 2008) together with the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008) remains key milestone international agreements when considering how donor and developing countries should work together for aid effectiveness. The Paris Declaration, agreed by over 100 states, lays out five principles to make aid more effective and included "developing countries set their own development strategies, improve institutions and tackle corruption; donor countries and organizations bring their support in line with the strategies and use local systems; and donor countries and organizations co-ordinate their actions" (OECD, 2015a). This again emphasises the importance of the local in the context of developing the conditions for conflict prevention.

For "fragile states", the Paris Declaration committed nations at risk to "make progress towards building institutions and establishing governance structures that deliver effective governance, public safety, security, and equitable access to basic social services for their citizens" (OECD, 2008, para 38). For their part, donors committed to "harmonise their activities ... [which is] crucial in the absence of strong government leadership; focus on upstream analysis, joint assessments, joint strategies, co-ordination of political engagement; align to the maximum extent possible behind central government-led strategies or, if that is not possible, ... make maximum use of country, regional, sector or non-government systems; avoid activities that undermine national institution building; use an appropriate mix of aid instruments, including support for recurrent financing, particularly for countries in promising but high-risk transitions" (OECD, 2008, para 39).

Recognising the specific difficulties of working in "fragile states" the OECD donors committed to ten Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations (OECD, 2007) which went beyond development co-operation to consider other aspects of international support reflecting a growing consensus that "fragile states" require responses that were "different to those needed in better performing countries" (OECD, 2011, p22). The principles had already been set out in 2007 (OECD, 2007) and focused on: "context as the starting point … ; do no harm … ; focus on state-building as the central objective; prioritise prevention; recognise the link between political, security and development objectives ... ; promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies ... ; align with local priorities ... ; agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors ... ; act fast – but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance ... ; avoid pockets of exclusion (i.e. aid orphans)..." (OECD, 2007, p1-2).

In parallel with the work of the OECD, the International Dialogue on Peace-building and State-building (IDPS) was established in 2008 in Accra in response to a perceived need for improved efforts to address the challenges of conflict and fragility; the IDPS Secretariat is hosted and supported by the OECD. The IDPS Dili Declaration (2010), which was endorsed by major donor nations, established the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs). The goals are:

- Foster inclusive political settlements and processes, and inclusive political dialogue.
- Establish and strengthen basic safety and security.
- Achieve peaceful resolution of conflicts and access to justice.
- Develop effective/accountable government institutions to facilitate service delivery.
- Create the foundations for inclusive economic development, including sustainable livelihoods, employment and effective management of natural resources.
- Develop social capacities for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
- Foster regional stability and co-operation.

Discussing the IDPS *Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Priorities and Challenges* report (IDPS, 2010b), the g7+[5] heads of state took the view that a "new approaches to aid is vital for peace-building and state-building" (g7+, 2010, p1) which should be "in line with the obligations ... which emerged from the first International Dialogue on Peace-building and State-building" (g7+, 2010, p1). The IDPS and g7+ went on to produce a report in 2011, the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, which proposed "key peacebuilding and statebuilding goals, focuses on new ways of engaging, and identifies commitments to build mutual trust and achieve better results in fragile states" (IDPS, 2011, p1) that were country led. At the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, the *New Deal* was endorsed by more than 40 countries and organisations. This was part of the new Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. The New Deal was seen as the main international policy framework that sets the standard and principles of engagement among the 40 countries and the organisation. Commenting on the UK's role at Busan, Andrew Mitchell asserted that the UK had a major role in achieving endorsement of the New Deal. The key point for this research it that Andrew Mitchell, speaking of the Busan agreement, said:

> What matters now is translating words into reality on the ground. It is vital that everyone involved in this deal takes concrete steps to move this new partnership forward (DFID, 2011d, p1).

Key to the Busan agreement was that donors agreed to use the PSGs to "focus on new ways of engaging, to support inclusive country-led and country-owned transition out of fragility based on a country-led fragility assessment developed by the g7+ … [leading to] … "a country-led one vision and one plan" (g7+, 2011a, p2).

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, established during Busan took a more positive view in their 2014 Report. The Global Partnership noted that "governments, donors and civil society are making progress in implementing their New Deal commitments. But this progress needs to speed up", and one of its key messages was that "peacebuilding and statebuilding need a political approach involving more robust dialogue at the highest levels among all parts of government" (Global Partnership for effective Development Co-operation, 2014, p1). The view was that the New Deal had influenced the discourse and policies of international and national partners "at both global and country level", and on progress in the pilot states noted that "while it is promoting greater dialogue and collaboration among partners, it has fallen short of any major shift in the way donors are working on the ground with the exception of a handful of New Deal 'pilot' countries, e.g. Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Somalia" (Global Partnership for effective Development Co-operation, 2014, p2). While the Global Partnership saw the New Deal as a journey that would take time to take hold as an approach to the needs of fragile states, there is a view that the focus on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the development of the follow-on UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may have resulted in the PSGs struggling to gain traction both within pilot states and donor partner states.

Following on from the period of the Coalition government, initiatives by the international community towards conflict prevention have continued. In 2015 the

[5] The g7+ is an association of 20 countries that are or have been affected by conflict and are now in transition. The g7+ group was established to give a collective voice to conflict-affected states.

international community had signed up to the SDGs that included Goal 16 which related to conflict prevention and the promotion of peaceful and sustainable societies. In the same year a UN Advisory Panel of Experts reviewed the UN peacebuilding architecture. The panel wrote of the "gaping hole" in the UN's structures and a "generalized misunderstanding of the nature of peacebuilding" (UN Advisory Group of Experts, 2015, p7). They commented that peacebuilding was an afterthought which lacked priority, resources and was undertaken only after conflict despite peace being at the core of the UN charter. As with so many reports over the years since 1992's *Agenda for Peace* and 2001's *Responsibility to Protect*, the Advisory Group argue for a broader comprehensive approach across the spectrum of conflict and peacebuilding. The Panel again emphasised the need for the UN system to place much greater emphasis on conflict prevention. Recalling the ICISS 2001 comment that:

> … prevention is the single most important dimension of the responsibility to protect: prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment and resources must be devoted to it (ICISS, 2001, p xi).

The Advisory Panel wrote that "peacebuilding has instead been relegated to a peripheral activity … efforts to prevent conflict and then sustain peace need to be embedded across all sectors [of the UN] and phases of action" (UN Advisory Group of Experts, 2015, p46).

Finally, in 2017 the UN and World Bank issued *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (World Bank and United Nations, 2018). This is the latest effort by major institutions to focus on the need to do better at conflict prevention. Once again there is a call for a "shift in approach to address risk factors" (World Bank and United Nations, 2018, p2), but it also acknowledges that early warning systems are still not effective. Again, there is emphasis on local development of security, justice and human rights to prevent conflict from becoming violent. However, the underlying messages are no different rather yet another view from another generation of officials and writers presenting a similar message of how to achieve a paradigm shift.

1.5 Background to the UK Coalition government's approach

Two points are important from the context that has been set out in the previous two sections. First, there has been a cyclical return to the issue of preventing conflict as seen in the number of reports issued by international organisations in particular the UN and World Bank (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, UN, 2000, IDPS, 2010b, World Bank, 2011, World Bank and United Nations, 2018). This cyclical return to the issue reflects the failure of the international community not only to prevent conflict in states but the failure to make any real progress towards addressing the issue. Furthermore, as will be see in the academic research (Chapter 2), the focus of debate is often on the performance of the international community in its interventions, although there has been a recent resurgence in interest in conflict prevention/settlements. This focus of the debate on performance may well reflect the impact of research funding allocations, much of it by governments keen to understand the issues of the day. But the issues of the day were firmly entrenched in the immediate fields of stabilisation, peacebuilding and statebuilding. Only more recently has the academic debate returned to the challenges of intervening in preventative diplomacy before a descent into large-scale violence. Second, linked to this cyclical nature of the need to improve conflict prevention, the intent of the Coalition government's BSOS third pillar begs the

question as to what the UK government, as part of the international community, aimed to do in order to improve its performance in supporting conflict prevention and was this achieved? To address this question, this thesis analyses the process of turning a broad political intent into action. While this research is focused on Whitehall policy development and the main contribution is at the conceptual and policy design level in the UK, there also is supporting evidence of how political intent was impacting actions by UK officials in specific countries in which the UK was working. In doing so it is necessary to place the UK government's renewed interest in conflict prevention and approach in the context of the international efforts identified above.

Immediately after attending the conference in Busan in 2011, Andrew Mitchell had made his declaration about turning words into reality. Although Busan was not specifically about conflict prevention, it played into the concept of assisting states at risk from violence by developing the politics and institutions that would lead to peaceful development; this can be seen from the first IDPS goal relating to peaceful political settlements. Key to the Busan agreement was that donors agreed to: use the PSGs "as an important foundation to enable progress towards the MDGs to guide our work in fragile states and conflict-affected states" and "focus on new ways of engaging, to support inclusive country-led and country-owned transition out of fragility based on a country-led fragility assessment developed by the g7+", leading to "a country-led one vision and one plan" (g7+, 2011a, p2). However, in 2014, the IDPS was noting a major challenge relating to the uptake of PSG in pilot countries which included Afghanistan and South Sudan for the UK. As a framework for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and statebuilding through the PSGs and the New Deal were still not bedded into an international approach. As will be seen in Chapter 4, UK policy makes a few references to the New Deal and the PSGs but not much else. The IDPS 2014 annual report notes that:

> Since its endorsement in 2011, the results of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States are mixed. It is helping to improve dialogue among government officials, donors, and civil society at the global and country level. Furthermore, the New Deal is helping to make aid more transparent, while also providing a framework for pooling donor financing. With respect to specific commitments, countries and organisations have made progress in conducting fragility assessments and developing compacts (see rating below). But overall, progress on the ground has to intensify if there is to be a "paradigm shift" in the way development cooperation is conducted in fragile and conflict-affected states (IDPS, 2014, p3).

This raises some key questions about how in the period after the BSOS and Busan policy and strategy were developed by the Coalition government and departments. These issues will be addressed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 before reviewing what was actually happening on the ground in the policy implementation studies (Chapters 6–7). These policy implementation studies enable a better understanding of how policy was being followed through by departments. As will be seen this thesis uses policy theory to assess how the intent was translated into action and lessons will be drawn from this. But before doing so it is important to address the very nature of policy and strategy as they are important tools to understand the way in which government turns intent into practice.

The issue of policy and strategy will run throughout this thesis as it is at the very cornerstone of the relationship between government intent and how that is translated into effective action. The 2011 World Bank report (2011), referenced in the BSOS, brings focus on the length of time it takes to stabilise states at risk of or emerging from violence and indicates that stabilisation can take decades of sustained effort and hence requires a degree of continuity of policy and effort. It is further exemplified by a comment in 2015 to the Parliamentary International Development Committee (ID Committee) by the Department for International Development (DFID) Policy Director General (Nick Dyer). Responding to questions regarding the rejection of an Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) recommendation on the need for overarching strategy, Dyer stated that the Department had a clear view of its priorities and there was a need for "a balance to be struck between a process like a strategy ... [as] ... in my experience strategies are not read ... [and] quite often gets [sic] out of date quite quickly" (ID Cttee, 2015, Para 57.40-59.00). Certainly, DFID and other departments were producing policies and strategies, so it begs a question as to what are the nature and purpose of policy and strategy, in relation to the ends, ways and means[6] by which intent was being executed. This issue will be addressed in Chapter 3 in advance of an examination of the way in which policy and strategy emerged in the remaining chapters.

1.6 Theoretical approach

This thesis used three theoretical models to understand how policy emerged; these models also provided a means to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the policy and resultant outcomes. The models are: rational choice (Simon, 1957) (Allison, 1971); incrementalism (Lindblom, 1959) (Campbell, 1969, Schon, 1970); and a model based on a "policy advocacy coalition framework" (Kingdon, 1984). It is important to note that the three theoretical models were used to understand how policy emerged, and this research was *not* an assessment of the theoretical models through the medium of conflict prevention policy. As the research developed two additional areas of policy theory also became of interest which are addressed at the end of this section: they are the concept of "street level bureaucrats" and policy transfer across countries in international development.

1.6.1 Introduction to theory

This thesis draws on public policy theory in order to set a basis for understanding how policy has been developed and how that policy subsequently impacts implementation programmes and plans. When considering public policy theory in the context of building stability I was mindful of the comment by Ayres and Marsh that "theories can be used to complement each other; providing different perspectives ... or offer contradicting explanations", but "authors are not sufficiently clear in distinguishing situations of theoretical contradiction from situations of theoretical synthesis" (Ayres and Marsh, 2013, p645). Noting this word of caution, it was not my intent to debate policy theory but rather to use the broad accepted theories to help understand how policy has been developed in Whitehall for UK action in fragile states.

Commenting on 40 years of policy debate, Ayres and March also noted the grip that positivist thinking, with emphasis on "quantitative methods and the statistical estimation of

[6] Ends – the objective; ways – the types of intervention; means – the resources to achieve the interventions.

models" (Ayres and Marsh, 2013, p645), has had on policy studies for many years. But they also suggest that there are "counter-currents of post positivism [that] have not only developed but arguably continue to strengthen" (Ayres and Marsh, 2013, p645). Ayres and Marsh suggest that there are two broad approaches. First, there are those who draw on the natural sciences and focus on complexity, evolution and pathway dependency. Second, there are those who focus more on "qualitative and interpretative directions" which seek to unlock meaning at the "micro-level of subjectivity, ambiguity and interpretation [which] provides insights into how policy actors construct and reconstruct their worlds and act within it and upon it" (Ayres and Marsh, 2013, p646). Ayres and March (2013) note that approaches of policy ethnography "favour detailed qualitative research which seeks to unlock meaning. Micro-level analysis of subjectivity, ambiguity, and interpretation provides insights into how policy actors construct and reconstruct their world and act within it and upon it" (Ayres and Marsh, 2013, p646). This thesis has very much erred towards this latter approach.

In considering public policy theory, also I kept in mind the view of Beryl Radin who in 1997 suggested that:

> Policy analysts find themselves dealing with marginal changes in existing programmes rather than crafting new approaches for decision making. The policy analyst operates within an environment of budget cuts, deficits and scarcity ... more and more decisions are made in budget rather than programmatic terms (Radin, 1997, p213).

Radin (1997) goes on to note that policy analysts sometimes find that they are at the fringes in terms of influence with more parties involved in the process and information seen as a public good. Furthermore, Radin commented that policy advisors "find it difficult to escape the pressures and demands of partisan and ideologically driven debates" (Radin, 1997, p214). Revisiting the issues associated with policy analysis in 2013, Radin reiterates her views stating that "policy analysis today exists in a highly volatile environment and the field itself has been defined and evaluated in terms of these pressures" (Radin, 2013, p9), although she see some differences between the US and parliamentary systems. For example: she suggests that the US is experiencing a higher degree of policy analysis and influence beyond government with NGOs driving their specific policy agendas. Radin (2013) suggests that this has not happened in parliamentary systems to the same degree. However, it is suggested that in international development there is evidence of the impact of the large development sector on UK policy either through their efforts or through government-funded research. Radin (2013) also suggests that there is a blurring of boundaries between management and policy development, together with an increased interest in performance management and whole-of-government responses requiring coordination across policy, programme and delivery lines; all of these trends are evident in the current UK government's approach to fragile states.

It in this context of increased complexity, globalisation and demands from scholars, the media and politicians for greater accountability that this thesis will use the three theoretical models which are considered in more detail below along with an analysis of how these theories relate to the issues investigated in this thesis.

1.6.2 Rational policy making

Rational policy making is often linked to the work of Simon's *Administrative Behaviour* (Simon, 1957) and Allison's writings on a rational choice model published in *Essence of Decisions: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Allison, 1971). Hill, in his commentary on the work of Simon and Alison, suggests that rational decision making "involves the selection of an alternative that will maximise the decision maker's values, the selection being made following a comprehensive analysis of alternatives and their consequences" (Hill, 2005, p146). Hill, comments on *Simon's theory of administration*, noting that for Simon rational was about "getting things right if not in absolute terms then certainly in terms of means and ends" (Hill, 2005, p146). Hill also comments on the limitations of the theory that were recognised by Simon, specifically: there was a question as to whose values and objectives are used; objectives of an organisation are implemented by individuals who may have a degree of discretion in interpreting the intent; evaluating consequences involves uncertainties; and rarely does decision making proceed in such a logical, comprehensive and purposive manner (Hill, 2005, p146).

Allison's (1971) analysis of decision making included the rational actor model in which actors act rationally in order to choose between alternatives to achieve goals. John (2015) suggests that rational policy theory is simplistic and was losing ground to alternative approaches. Hill comments that Simon was very much alive to weaknesses in his theory but suggested that the process of decision making involved three steps which remain relevant. Simon's steps were "(1) the listing of all the alternative strategies; (2) the determination of all the consequences that follow upon each of these strategies; (3) the comparative evaluation of these sets of consequences" (Hill, 2005, quoting Simon, p147). This represents a top down, politically driven, technical problem-solving approach that focuses on ends and then considers means; it is useful as it helps to identify aspects of the process of policy development that may well be evident or absent. For example, what were the ends for UK's involvement in building stability overseas and do the strategies reflect those ends?

With regard to evidence, Young et al. have developed a number of models of how "the policy process handles the input of knowledge" and suggest that in a problem-solving model "research *follows* policy, and policy issues shape research priorities; from the point of view of government, the expert is 'on tap', but not on top" (Young et al., 2002, p216). Rational theory can also be explained by a knowledge-driven model in which it is "assumed that research *leads* policy" (Young et al., 2002, p216). In either of these cases rational theory would seek to identify clear goals and objectives, albeit value based, with associated developed understandings of outcomes and consequences leading to coherent government policy. It is perhaps in this respect that a rational theory is useful for this thesis as it is in government objectives and goal setting that one might argue that there was a degree of confusion in government thinking that result in incoherent policies and strategy for actions in fragile states (an issue to be explored). It is in this assessment of clarity of goals and high-level strategy that rational theory can be useful but the rational approach does have limitations as, according to Lindblom (1959) , the approach "cannot be practiced except for relatively simple problems and even then in a somewhat modified form" (Lindblom, 1959, p80). However, this is probably the limit of the usefulness of rational theory as the UK government has little real control over the issues being addressed – only perhaps at the low-level service delivery project level. Linking to Lindblom's (1959) criticisms of rational

theory there is now an extensive critique of the rational choice theory approach not least in relation to evidence-based policy. For these reasons rational theory was kept in mind throughout the research; however, it was not drawn upon much compared to the next two theories.

1.6.3 Incrementalism policy development and "muddling through"

Lindblom's alternative theory, which he termed *successive limited comparisons*, focuses on "policies which differ from each other incrementally, and which differ incrementally from the status quo" resulting in a comparison of "marginal differences in expected consequences" (Hill, 2005, p149). Decision makers constantly return to the issue in question to improve the outcome rather than attempting to achieve some ideal outcome at the outset (Hill, 2005, p149). Hill comments that in successive limited comparisons "decision makers adjust objectives to available means instead of striving for a fixed set of objectives ... a policy is directed at a problem; it is tried, altered, tried in its altered form, altered again" (Hill, 2005, quoting Braybrooke and Lindblom, p149).

For Lindblom (1959), in rational theory first "ends are isolated, then means to achieve them are sought" whereas for his approach "means and ends are not distinct" (Lindblom, 1959, p81). In Lindblom's view attempting to set critical values or objectives at the outset is difficult as these themselves are often not agreed upon by politicians and administrators, which he suggests is particularly so in social policy. Given the inability to "formulate the relative values first" results in the need to "choose directly among alternative policies that offer marginal combinations of values" (Lindblom, 1959, p82). For Lindblom making policy was "at best a very rough process" (Lindblom, 1959, p86). He continued to evolve his basic theory and included views on the role of ideology involving "adaptive adjustments 'in which a decision-maker simply adapts to decisions around him'" (Hill, 2005, quoting Lindblom, p149). Lindblom was not primarily focused on evidence driven policy choices; his view was that "policy making reaches settlements, reconciliations, adjustments, and agreements that one can evaluate only inconclusively by such standards as fairness, acceptability, openness to reconsideration and responsiveness to a variety of interests" (Head, 2010, quoting Lindblom, p83).

Schon's *Beyond the Stable State* (1970) also has application to an incremental theory as it focuses on uncertainty and societal instability. Schon's (1970) view was that one cannot expect stable states that will endure, and hence one must learn to understand and manage these transformations. While Schon's primary focus was on institutions, the idea of learning is as applicable to incremental policy development through best practice and project/programme review. For effective learning and incremental policy development there must also be effective policy assessment, but this is far from straightforward in social policy issues.

Campbell (1969) addressed the issue of effective policy assessment in his classic paper *Reforms as Experiment* when he stated that policy assessment was failing to deliver assessed effectiveness. Campbell (1969) suggested that "reforms are advocated as though they were certain to be successful", and with the political implications of policy outcomes, he comments that:

> Administrators wisely prefer to limit the evaluations to those the outcomes of which they can control.... Ambiguity, lack of truly comparable comparison bases, and a lack of concrete evidence all work to increase the administrator's control over what gets said, or at least to reduce the bite of criticism in the case of actual failure (Campbell, 1969).

Campbell commented that even if there was a commitment to "hard-headed evaluation" the political and administrative system "cannot tolerate learning of failure. To be truly scientific we must be able to experiment. We must be able to advocate without that excess of commitment that blinds us to reality testing" (Campbell, 1969, p410). Campbell lists nine threats to internal validity which remain as relevant today and are: history, maturation, instability, testing, instrumentation, regression artefacts, selection, experimental mortality and selection-maturation interaction (Campbell, 1969, p411). These threats are inevitably an issue for evidence collection in the complex environment of international development and conflict prevention.

As well as issues of policy assessment, Schon was also critical of what he saw as the "prevailing theory of public learning [in which the] rational/experimental model of public learning underlies most current thought and practice in the field of public policy" (Schon, 1973, p121). Commenting in 1973, Schon suggests that rational/experimental models of public learning underpinned thought and practice in the field of public policy, and arguably that has continued. However, Schon took the view that "inquiry addresses itself to the best policy for tackling issue, but does not turn back on the relevance and apparent urgency of the issue" (Schon, 1973, p121). This is an important point as Schon suggesting that "evaluation may address itself to the relative efficiency or effectiveness ... but seldom to the appropriateness of the policy itself" (Schon, 1973, p121). Kingdon was also critical of Lindborn's incrementalism and took the view that it was "not a description of the world but a strategy that one might use to manipulate outcomes" favoured by decision makers with natural caution and "those who advocate major change" but must "push for small ones part at a time in order to move in their preferred direction" (Kingdon, 1984, p84). As will be seen, these issues become relevant in this research.

Whether policy or strategy, there is much evidence of incremental development in UK policy emerging from lessons which have been captured in MOD doctrine publications and DFID 'How To' notes. But Barakat and Waldman (2013) see some of the answer to improved learning, cooperation and coordination in Whitehall through joint analysis based on a common tool. They suggest that early pilot studies across Whitehall have improved stakeholder alignment of objectives, but they recognise the risks of joint analysis "descending to the lowest common denominator based on consensus views" (Barakat and Waldman, 2013, p280). This issue will be assessed in terms of whether the policy that emerged for upstream, based on experience and learning and best practice, delivered the direction and prioritisation necessary for execution planning or represented a normative, lowest common denominator. If policy is found to be normative, or doctrine, then it is suggested that policy must also identify the weaknesses of any donor approach. At the very least, it is argued, policies built on learning and experience, should indicate where the UK government's efforts were to be directed. For implementable policy one must look to individual departmental country plans which provide the detail for the circumstances of a given partner country. However, this approach tends towards the technical approach and tends towards programmes and projects which is a potential weakness of the approach.

1.6.4 Problems, policies and politics; coalition building

Schon took the view that when "ideas are taken up by people already powerful in society this gives them a kind of legitimacy" (Schon, 1973, p128). He set out his ideas on crisis, the movement of ideas "from free areas to the mainstream", the struggle for acceptance, and how ideas gain traction in a political dimension (Schon, 1973, p128-142). These ideas are extended in Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (1984) which "examines the political system as a whole and embraces the relative importance of individual agents, ideas, institutions, and external processes in it" (John, 2015, p7).

Kingdon (1984) proposes a revised model of Cohen, Marsh and Olsen's (1972) 'garbage can model'[7] of organisational choice in which he observed:

> Three families of processes in federal government agenda setting: problems, policies and politics. People recognise problems, they generate proposals for public policy changes, and they engage in such political activities as election campaigning and pressure group lobbying (Kingdon, 1984, p92).

Kingdon (1984) distinguished between participants (who could be involved in one or all the streams) and processes. For government Kingdon (1984) identified the processes as problem recognition, development and refinement of proposals and politics. Second, there are the participants which include the specialists (civil servants, academics, interest groups) which "concentrate on generating proposals ... each with their own pet idea or axe to grind" who "float their ideas up and the ideas bubble around in the policy communities" (Kingdon, 1984, p92). Third, the political stream encompasses the whole process of national and international politics and encompasses "national mood, vagaries of public opinion, election results, change of administration ... ideology ... and interest group pressure campaigns" (Kingdon, 1984, p93). For Kingdon each participant or process operates either as "an impetus or constraint" and the problem stream can push some problems higher on the agenda, but it can also retard the upward movement of others, particularly though the constraint (Kingdon, 1984, p93). Kingdon suggests that the three processes:

> … develop and operate largely independently of one another. Solutions are developed whether or not they respond to a problem. The political stream may change suddenly whether or not the policy community is ready or the problems facing the country have changed (Kingdon, 1984, p93).

But, Kingdon does recognise that the streams are not absolutely independent; he cites the example of criteria for selecting ideas in the policy stream being "affected by specialists' anticipation of what the political or budgetary constraints might be" (Kingdon, 1984, p93). Notwithstanding this hint of connection, Kingdon is of the view that the "streams are largely separate from one another, largely governed by different forces, different considerations and different styles" (Kingdon, 1984, p93). For Kingdon, once one understands these streams:

[7] A model of decision making that is irrational and assumes that problems, solutions and participants are disconnected. Furthermore, the model suggests that few problems may be solved in the process and then only by chance.

> The key to understanding agenda and policy change is the coupling. The separate streams come together at critical times. A problem is recognised, a solution available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action (Kingdon, 1984, p93).

As for problems, Kingdon (1984) examines indicators for monitoring activities, but notes that indicators often require a focusing event or a crisis to bring full attention on the problem. A focusing event can also be "a powerful symbol that catches on, or the personal experience of a policy maker"; but Kingdon also suggests that focusing events only rarely carry a subject to policy agenda prominence by themselves as they need to be accompanied by something else like research or an interest group (Kingdon, 1984, p95-105). Kingdon (1984) comments that much of this activity is driven by specialist communities which can be tight knit or fragmented. Fragmented communities, Kingdon suggests, result in "disjointed policy, lack of common orientation, and agenda instability" (Kingdon, 1984, p151). But, the policy stream results in a short list of proposals to address a problem that is:

> Not necessarily a consensus in the policy community on the one proposal that meets their criteria; rather it is an agreement that a few proposals are prominent. Having a viable alternative available for adoption facilitates the high placement of a subject on a governmental agenda, and dramatically increases the chances for placement on a decision agenda (Kingdon, 1984, p151).

Kingdon (1984) addresses the political stream and addresses the national mood, the role of organised political force, the role of government (and the effect of personnel turnover), and consensus building usually through bargaining rather than persuasion as happens amongst policy specialists. He concludes that the political stream is "an important promoter or inhibitor of high agenda status" and important actors in the system, not just politicians, judge whether there is enough force of opinion for action. The political stream also judge whether the "general public would at least tolerate the direction pursued at the elite level" (Kingdon, 1984, p171). Finally, Kingdon addresses the policy window that opens up by either a "compelling problem or by happenings in the political stream" and describes 'problem windows' and 'political windows'; he suggests that a window of opportunity missed means waiting for another" (Kingdon, 1984, p204).

This approach has the potential to offer upstream policy makers with an approach that may well support the emergence of strategy based on a whole-of-government approach. The introduction of an inter-departmental conflict analysis tool also had the potential to support this type of problem focused coalition building across Whitehall that spanned the political and bureaucracy. However, this theoretical approach still requires policies to be brought forward that can address the problems identified. In that respect this approach for upstream is still reliant on stakeholders developing clarity of objectives (drawing on rational theory) and policies that work (drawing on incrementalism). The strength of this approach is the bringing together in two overlapping coalitions (HMG/UK and the IC/target country) a focus on the problem and ways forward. This approach provides more focus on the politics of policy and problem solving.

1.6.5 Policy theory, 'street-level bureaucrats' and policy transfer

The policy implementation studies also draws on policy theory with specific reference to 'street-level bureaucracy' first developed by Lipsky (1980) in his *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Lipsky's work and how the debate evolved is covered by Brodkin (2012). She notes that the basis of Lipsky's work was that it brings together literature on "bureaucratic discretion … with an emerging literature on policy implementation" (Brodkin, 2012, p941) which is relevant to this research. Lipsky's work addresses the bottom-up and top-down issues associated with policy implementation and the relationship with complex organisational behaviour. The work addresses situations where formal policy is ambiguous or contains multiple (even conflicting) objectives and when "street-level practitioners are able to exercise discretion in the course of their work" (Brodkin, 2012, p942); hence it is relevant to conflict prevention. Brodkin comments that these discretionary actions by officials working at street level are effectively developing and implementing policy, and hence these officials "occupy a position of political significance" as they are not only "interpreters of public policy" but they are an "interface between government" (Brodkin, 2012, p942) and the target of the policy. This approach to policy development is relevant to the policy implementation studies. As will be seen, relatively junior officials (and or contractors) working at the 'street level' find themselves taking forward the BSOS political intent into programmes and projects to execute policy goals of their own design.

The issues raised by an examination of "street-level bureaucrats" also brought into focus the issue of policy transfer across countries. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) comment on the growing literature concerned with "the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p5). Building on previous work and the work of others, Dolowitz and Marsh developed a framework to analyse the process of policy transfer which was built around seven questions. "Why do actors engage in policy transfer? Who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer? What is transferred? From where are lessons drawn? What are the different degrees of transfer? What restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process? ... How is the process of policy transfer related to policy 'success' or policy 'failure'?" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p8). These questions are important and are addressed to an extent in the research policy implementation studies (see Chapters 3, 7 & 8) although not in great depth as the focus of the research is on what the UK was seeking to do rather than an in-depth understanding of what happened in-country given the long-term nature of structural conflict prevention. However, there is a wide discourse on policy transfer and issues that were found to be of particular relevance related to political power and policy transfer (Benson and Jordan, 2011, Ellison, 2017). These issues were picked up on in the policy implementation studies.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the main characteristics of conflict prevention and the overlap with other interventions. It has identified that there has been a tendency to intervene later once conflict has already turned violent. It has provided the policy context to the Coalition government's renewed intent to do better at conflict prevention. Set against the problematic background of failed attempts to do better at conflict prevention, this thesis will

analyse the UK's approach to policy development and implementation during the Coalition government in detail to understand the challenges of turning positive political intent into practical reality with partners and local actors, not all aligned to the UK's thinking.

This analysis is important as it addresses two issues. It goes some way to filling a gap in conflict prevention literature relating to why governments find it difficult to intervene effectively early enough to assist states from descending into violent conflict despite the well understood need for a paradigm shift upstream. Second, this thesis also demonstrates how policy theory can help understand the way in which policy evolved and cast light on some of the strengths and pitfalls of the approach taken by government and departments. The literature review will address the themes that dominated academic debate and the gaps that remain that are pertinent to this thesis, and Chapter 3 will set out in detail the use of policy theory as part of the methodology. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

- **Chapter 2** – **Literature review; conflict prevention** – a review of the academic debate relating to conflict prevention and its relationship with this thesis.

- **Chapter 3** – **Methodology** – an explanation of: the methods used; secondary research questions; the use of policy theory to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the policy that emerged; and the process of how the policy implementation studies used in this research contributed to the thesis and how the studies were selected.

- **Chapter 4** – **The coalition government's conflict prevention policy** – a review of the development of the Coalition government's conflict prevention policy and the reaction to it in Parliament and elsewhere. The review is followed by an assessment of how departments subsequently took forward the policy.

- **Chapter 5** – **Whitehall politics and policy** – an analysis of the extent to which a coherent approach emerged in Whitehall, drawing on official statements and interviews conducted with politicians, officials and commentators (NGOs and academics).

- **Chapters 6 & 7** – **South Sudan and Nepal policy implementation studies respectively** – focuses on what was happening within states that the UK was supporting with emphasis on a whole-of-government approach to conflict prevention in each country covering: the UK government's role within the international community; the UK government's political engagement and strategy; and a review of key upstream programmes in each case**.**

- **Chapter 8 – Conflict prevention; concepts but not practice** – addresses the wider issue of why a major donor like the UK, with a clear political intent, still struggled to make headway in developing its role in structural conflict prevention, leaving it to officials to carry out 'best efforts'.

- **Chapter 9 - Getting upstream is difficult; but we add to the difficulties –** draws together the conclusions and presents the main findings. The chapter then comments on the contribution to structural conflict prevention before addressing limitations, further work and implications for structural conflict prevention policy.

Chapter 2 – Literature review: conflict prevention

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the academic literature related to conflict prevention. The academic literature both informed the Coalition government at the time, and also informs this research in relation to the debate then and now regarding structural conflict prevention. The chapter is in three parts. Initially an overview is provided of the conflict prevention literature since the end of the Cold War in the context of the wider liberal peace literature. This is followed by a more detailed review of the structural conflict prevention literature which tends to focus heavily on conceptual ideas. With few empirical studies to draw on and noting the overlap between statebuilding and aspects of conflict prevention, the chapter also reviews themes from the statebuilding literature that are seen as important to the study of conflict prevention. The literature review not only picks out key themes that are of importance to structural conflict prevention policy development but also demonstrates the dearth of empirical research which links to the lack of international efforts in structural conflict prevention.

2.2 The approach to the literature review and an overview of the conflict prevention literature (1987–2020)

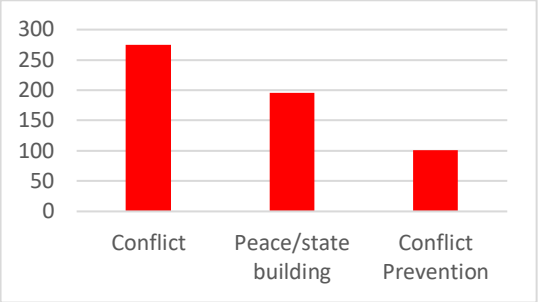
At the outset of this research project the net for academic research was cast wide resulting in an extensive library of articles. The early literature review working papers for this project initially focused on interventionism in the round and liberal peacebuilding. It became apparent that the interventionism and liberal peacebuilding discourse were both wide and contentious, spanning theory, concepts, specific themes and case studies. This initial focus on interventionism drew on the work of a number of well-cited academics including Bickerton (2007), Call (2008), Chandler (Chandler, 2006), Cunliffe (2007), Duffield (2009), Fukuyama (1992), Leftwich (1995), Newman (2009), Paris (2010), Richmond (2006), and Zürcher (2011). It resulted in a library in Endnote of over 700 journal articles and books to help to understand key themes in the literature which required more attention. Those themes can be grouped under the general headings of conflict, prevention, responsibility to protect, peacebuilding, statebuilding, governance, development and security. Additionally, sub-themes were also identified including politics, democracy, effectiveness, sovereignty, human security and civil society.

Given the scope of the literature, there was a need to focus efforts on conflict prevention but to also take note on key sub-themes that had struck a chord as being particularly pertinent to structural conflict prevention. Early on, and reflecting the research question, a theoretical approach to interventionism and liberal peace was set to one side. This was not because it may or may not be pertinent, but the Coalition governments interventionism policy was a given; the question being researched was why it was not effective. In order to focus the research library, and taking a note of citations and institutions/journals represented, a combination of the Endnote search tool and a paper sift of research papers built up over time, were used to narrow down the library to specific areas of interest to this research.

Examining conflict prevention literature, one is immediately struck by the imbalance of academic research between conflict, post-conflict reconstruction (peacebuilding and state

building) and conflict prevention. Table 2.1 is an analysis of the database of articles gathered for this research broadly using the phases of the conflict cycle depicted in Figure 1.1, although the literature does not conform to the four phases depicted in that diagram; Table 2.1 below includes both academic research and international reports. Nonetheless, the imbalance of effort between pre-conflict and conflict/post-conflict is clear to see.

Table 2.1 – Academic papers and international reports on conflict prevention, conflict, conflict management and resolution, peacemaking, peacebuilding and statebuilding



The search that resulted in the above table focused on the term "conflict prevention". Taking this analysis further, Tables 2.2 and 2.3 (below) summarise the conflict prevention literature published since the end of the Cold War. This was the timeframe when international voices were calling for the UN and the international community to do more in conflict prevention. Overall, in Figure 2.2 one sees a relatively low level of activity on conflict prevention research over the period which covered both operational and structural conflict prevention. There are a number of themes that can be identified as depicted in Figure 2.3 However, it is noted that the issue of conflict prevention has been dealt with in other related areas, but it tends to be done so in passing rather than as a main agenda issue. For the purposes of this literature review and, linking to the overlap of phases identified in Figure 1.3, issues of relevance to conflict prevention are explored from the wider peacebuilding, statebuilding and stabilisation literature.

Table 2.2 – Frequency of journal articles relating to conflict prevention (1994–2020)

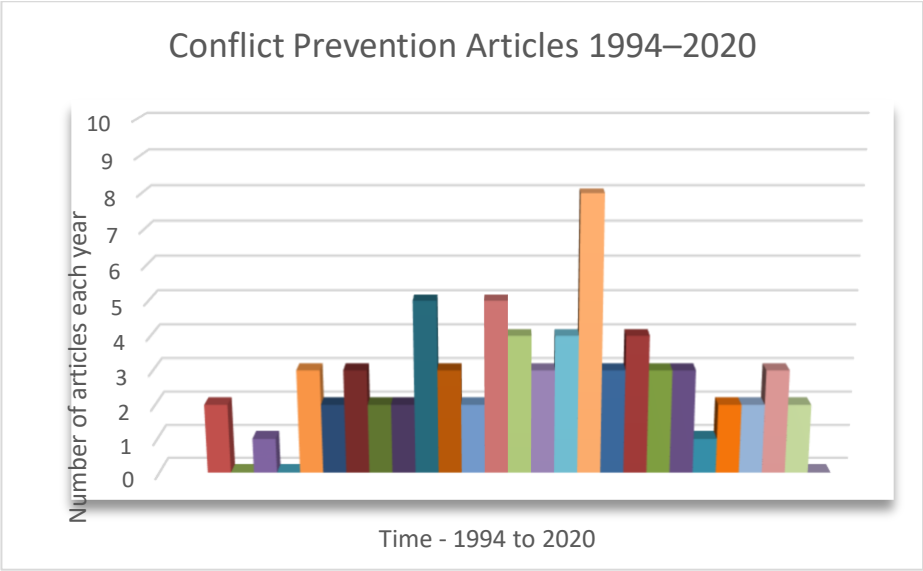
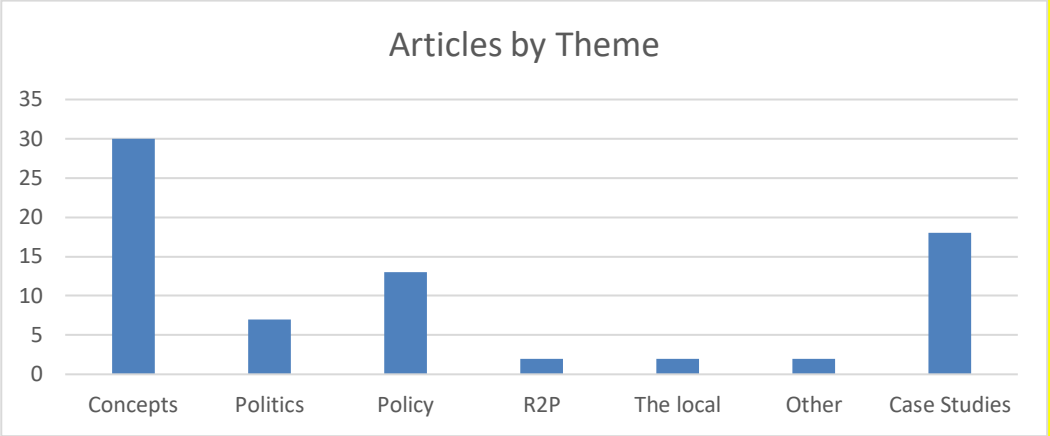


Table 2.3 – Summary of the themes of the conflict prevention articles identified



Unsurprisingly, a literature search in English results in predominantly a critique of conflict prevention from a northern perspective. Much of the literature, is conceptual in nature and reflects the issue identified in Chapter 1 in that the international community has not managed to operationalise the intent to do better at conflict prevention. It is therefore unsurprising that the balance of the articles tends towards a conceptual view of conflict prevention or a method view by which conflict prevention might be addressed by the agents involved.

The northern dominated discourse tends to address what "we" should do to "them". Few authoritative academic studies have been identified from major southern centres of learning. That is not to suggest that there are no southern voices, for there are: for example President Ashraf Ghani, a one-time senior UN advisor whose focus was statebuilding (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008) and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen and his writings on violence, peace and democracy and the need to understand the causes of violence (Sen, 2011). Institutional work also has been conducted by the International Dialogue for Peace and Security whose chairs have included eminent southern politicians. Notwithstanding the contributions of these southern experts, conflict prevention and wider discourse on peacebuilding and statebuilding is still dominated by northern norms and values, albeit of differing perspectives.

The conceptual literature clusters around 2003–10, which accords with the international debates relating to R2P, the Paris Declaration, the OECD focus on working in fragile states, and involvement in costly interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq by NATO and coalition states. The policy debate is centred around 2007–13, but there is only one article that specifically addresses the translation of donor political intent into concrete policy. This study of Sweden's conflict prevention policy (Björkdahl, 2007) highlights the evolution of conflict prevention as a key part of Sweden's foreign, development and defence policy; the approach also influenced Sweden's presidency of the EU in 2001, building on Sweden's role in the UN mission in Macedonia (1995–99). Other studies focus more on the issues associated with turning intent into effective policy and include examples from the EU (John, 2005, Cameron, 2003) but these are quite dated. A recent study on the conceptual and practical challenges for conflict prevention by the EU comments that there was a "lack of conceptual clarity" and issues with "leadership, internal coordination and cooperation" (Davis, 2018, p157). Furthermore, Davis noted issues with "prioritization of early

preventive action, based on early warning" and "over response to conflicts that have already escalated" (Davis, 2018, p 157). One indication of the ongoing difficulties is the fact that as recently as 2019 the EU Parliament endorsed a resolution to increase its efforts to build capability in conflict prevention and mediation (EU Parliament, 2019).

There are a small number of articles relating to specific issues of conflict prevention (politics, R2P and the influence of the local), some of which are examined below as they are key to this thesis. As for case studies, there are a number around the late 1990s and early 2000s linked to the EU and Europe, although these are more operational conflict prevention rather than the structural conflict prevention which is the focus of this thesis. There are also some lessons learned relating to the politics for conflict prevention focused on South Africa, Northern Ireland, and some pre-conflict studies in South East Asia (Weissmann, 2010, Weissmann, 2012). Finally, there are cases studies that focus more on the local in Kenya and the Niger Delta, and a recent book edited by Clack and Johnson, *Before Military Intervention; Upstream Stabilisation in Theory and Practice* (Clack and Johnson, 2019) looks at the issues from a military perspective.

Overall, the literature sheds little light on the issues for governments in translating political intent to move into structural conflict prevention and no explicit case studies on pre-conflict structural conflict prevention. Post-conflict prevention is certainly addressed in the wider literature of peacebuilding and statebuilding and this will be assessed below. However, while the literature review has highlighted the conceptual drive to doing more in conflict prevention, it has added little to the specific issues that have prevented governments from developing and implementing policies and actions. Nonetheless, there is much to be gained from examining the post-conflict prevention literature in more detail as it helps to understand the conceptual and practical issues to which this thesis must pay attention.

2.3 Conflict and concepts of conflict prevention

2.3.1 The changing nature of conflict and implications for conflict prevention

Over the past 20 years scholars and international organisations have generally agreed on the changing nature of conflict in the post-Cold War period. Scholars from a range of disciplines have suggested that the nature of conflict has moved from state on state military combat to conflict within states. Wars, repression and insurgencies within states, and between peoples, have been the dominant feature of conflict since the end of the Cold War (Kaldor, 2012, Smith, 2006, Brown and Langer, 2012a). A paper by the US Institute of Peace noted that "on average, about four or five new armed conflicts begin each year, and this rate has changed little over a period of decades" (Woocher, 2009, p3). On these conflicts Woocher notes the failure to prevent conflict and that prevention is more aspiration than established practice. There is general agreement that this shift from force-on-force to inter-state conflict has had a significant impact on civilian casualties.

The debate on causation is relevant in that to prevent violent conflict from emerging one must understand the context. The incidence and causes of conflict are widely studied (Brown and Langer, 2012b, Mac Ginty, 2006, Duffield, 1998, Kaldor, 2012). GSDRC (GSDRC, 2010) reviewed the literature coving global drivers of conflict for DFID and drawing on the work of a range of academics focused on: climate change, migration and the environment; foreign financial flows and the financial crisis; natural resources; and

international trade in arms and drugs. The complexity of causes is further complicated at the local; here researchers have focused on ethnicity, human security, poverty and control of resources. It is also worth keeping in mind the classic debate in terms of the causes of conflict relating to the greed and grievance theories posited by Stewart (2002, 2008) relating to horizontal inequalities and Collier (2004) who is associated with the greed argument.

Drawing on experiences of interventions together with this wide body of academic research, organisations like the OECD have drawn up their indicators of fragility which are used extensively to frame policy. These indicators focused on: "violence; access to justice; effective and accountable institutions; economic inclusion and stability; and capabilities to prevent and adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters" (OECD, 2015b, p 19). However, this all-encompassing list drawing from academic research and experience indicates the difficulty in isolating specific causes of conflict. Indeed, Mac Ginty suggests that focusing on the causation may risk missing a key factor of violent conflict – its maintenance as civil wars "are long-lasting and deeply embedded in the societal structures and processes" (Mac Ginty, 2006, p59). This itself indicates the issue of early intervention pre conflict. While the international community may seek to intervene pre conflict, they may be thwarted by actors with a very different agenda. Keen (2000) takes this point further with a focus not only on the causes of war but also its function; he sees wars as systems of interlocking interests and that some actors "take advantage of a rebellion … for purposes of their own" (Keen, 2000, p 27) and may have a vested interest in prolonging conflict. All these factors outlined above directly links to the notion of conflict prevention being a wicked problem and points to the difficulty for intervening states as outlined in Chapter 1.

2.3.2 The conceptual debate

Notable early work on the conceptual discourse includes that by Lund (1996) that was used as a baseline in Chapter 1 for a conceptual approach to conflict prevention. Lund returned to the theme of conflict prevention periodically (Lund, 2009, Lund, 2003) with a common message that conflict prevention "is still a relatively marginal international concern" citing reasons including:

> A plurality of possible instruments and agents; … lack of conceptual closure about stages and types of interventions; a lack of confidence due in part to dim awareness of the actual extent of recent capacity building and effective actions on the ground; dispersed activism globally and in a given country by diverse professions and overstretched governmental and non-governmental international organizations; and scattered research agendas and findings, yielding little usable guidance for would-be preventors (Lund, 2009, p 307).

Lund further comments that "pro-active responses to head off potential conflicts are happening" and evidence suggests "that combined with certain conducive factors, they can be effective" (Lund, 2009, p 307). Lund saw three steps as necessary to reach the "unfulfilled potential of conflict prevention" which were: to "consolidate what is known" as there was a lack of knowledge by policy makers; "focus the knowledge on emerging conflicts"; and "conduct more basic prevention research" (Lund, 2009, pp 307/8). This suggests the lack of clear analytical guidance available to policy makers at the time of the Coalition government when it sought to move upstream. As will be seen in Chapters 4–9, this thesis tests the extent to which these actions were followed through. This thesis also

contributes to Lund's last point on the need for basic research as this research focuses upon the relationship between political intent of a donor state and its resultant policy and action.

Bellamy (2008) addresses conflict prevention in relation to the responsibility to protect following the ICISS report (*The Responsibility to Protect)* (ICISS, 2001*)*; the report identified the responsibility to prevent as "the single most important aspect of its report" (Bellamy, 2008, quoting the ICISS report, p 135). Bellamy commented that most of the attention by scholars and political establishment was to the "concept's reaction component rather than to its prevention component" (Bellamy, 2008, p 135). Addressing this imbalance Bellamy examined progress with "respect to changes to, and attitudes toward the responsibility to prevent since the publication of the commission's report in 2001" (Bellamy, 2008, p 135). Bellamy found that the relative neglect of prevention with respect to *The Responsibility to Protect*, "could be found in a combination of doubts about how wide the definition of prevention should be, political concerns raised by the use of prevention in the war on terrorism, and practical concerns about the appropriate institutional locus for responsibility" (Bellamy, 2008, p 135). The reference to the width of the definition is a direct reference to the narrow way in which the UN Security Council subsequently focused their efforts in its response to the responsibility to protect[8] (Sec Gen UN, 2009). An issue for this research is therefore one of leadership and specifically political leadership. As seen in the definition being used in this thesis (Chapter 1), conflict prevention is fundamentally a political process that is underpinned by other ways and means.

Noting the narrow focus of R2P within the UN response, it is useful to see the way in which Bellamy returned to the issue on R2P for the UN University (Bellamy, 2013). In this publication Bellamy addressed what he saw as the challenges for implementation and made a number of recommendations. He noted that there was a need to make "prevention a living reality" (Bellamy, 2013, p 30). Bellamy argued for a "shift from rhetoric to firm policies and strategies" (Bellamy, 2013, p 30), and this was 12 years after the ICISS report. Bellamy suggested that a UN strategy for prevention might encourage other regional and sub-regional organisations' arrangements to use it. But of particular interest to this research Bellamy noted that:

> Operationalising strategies for prevention, however, are notoriously difficult, especially within the UN context. Despite its rhetorical appeal, it is difficult to secure additional resources for prevention since success should mean that nothing happens. There are also major overlaps between prevention and other mandates and activities. As a result, prevention is difficult to delineate in practice (Bellamy, 2008, p 31).

[8] "The Secretary-General set out a comprehensive strategy for implementing RtoP, adopting a 'narrow but deep' approach: narrow in its exclusive focus on the prevention of four crimes (genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity) and protection of populations from them, but deep in its ambition to employ all instruments available to the UN system, regional and sub-regional arrangements, Member States, and civil society. This strategy was organised around the idea that, as agreed by Member States in 2005, RtoP rests on three pillars" BELLAMY, A. J. 2013. *The Responsibility to Protect: Towards a "Living Reality"* [Online]. UNA-UK. Available: https://www.una.org.uk/sites/default/files/UNA-UK%20Alex%20J%20Bellamy%20R2P%20Briefing%20Report%20no.%201.pdf [Accessed 18 fEB 2020]. The three pillars are: protect, assist and encourage states to fulfil their responsibilities, and take timely and decisive action to protect populations.

Bellamy noted that while a strategy was needed it also had to be carefully thought through, and this was just on the narrow agenda of four specific crimes. Again, this points to some real concerns as to how the Coalition government set about translating their own intent to get upstream which will be examined in later chapters.

2.3.3 Timing and overlap with other concepts

The timing of an intervention is one of the most difficult for an intervening state. Writing after a Parliamentary debate on the intervention in Syria, a senior military officer wrote:

> The need to intervene has not gone away. Quite the opposite: it has, in my view, exponentially increased as the number of faltering nations and regions that require intervention grows. The optimum point of intervention must be in the very early stages of instability, when the likelihood of recovery is highest, much like the human immune system (Lamb, 2014).

He took the view that it was better to intervene early or "much later, not in between, in the middle of chaos" (Lamb, 2014).

How early is early; in the rapids or when the rocks can be seen in the calm but fast-flowing waters when there are signs of trouble ahead? Tanner (2000) comments on the numerous activities that are included under the concept of conflict prevention at all stages of the cycle of conflict; he comments that conflict prevention "remains an enigma" (Tanner, 2000, p541). Lund (Lund, 2009) delineates between "early and late prevention" in which the former "seeks to improve the relationship of parties or states that are not actively fighting" (Lund, 2009, p289) rather than late when violence is imminent. Lund noted the problems associated with late attempts at conflict prevention which would "eclipse its proactive nature" and be more appropriate for other forms of intervention like "conflict management, peace enforcement or peacekeeping were more fitting" (Lund, 2009, p289). But Lund also comments on the gap between "the promise of conflict prevention and its more deliberate pursuit" (Lund, 2009, p288).

Lund, comments that conflict prevention "has been distinguished from other approaches to conflict mainly by *when* it comes into play during a conflict not *how* it is done" (Lund, 2009, p288). In relation to the 'when', there has been much research into the causes and hence indicators of conflict that might provide early warning. Ramsbotham et al. (2018) comment on the US and UK efforts on improving early warning and fragile states commenting that while governments seem confident in being able in their ability to identify structural factors that contribute to the risk of violent conflict "they are less confident of proximate indicators intended to give warning twelve months ahead, and still less confident of shorter-term warnings" (Ramsbotham et al., 2018, p152). For Lund there is at times an "excess of political will" with northern donors already engaged in development activities but "pursuing a variety of different policy goals that are not necessarily supportive of conflict prevention" (Lund, 2009, p296). Lund notes that it is not that northern states do not know what is happening, as they are already in place, but "everyone is busily pursuing other mandates" (Lund, 2009, p296). Lund goes further and suggest that part of the problem lying behind "disparate wills are differing values and paradigms of separate disciplines and professions such as conflict resolution, peace studies, human rights, economic development,

political development and security studies" (Lund, 2009, p296); this plays into the issue of a UK whole-of-government approach and strategic intent.

Melander and Pigache (2007) write of direct or operational prevention that focuses on an immediate crisis and has specific targets for the reduction of violence; this is a short-term strategy. They also note structural or deep prevention that involves a longer timeframe and aims not only to reduce violence but also addresses the root causes; referencing the Carnegie Commission, they make specific mention of human security, well-being and justice. Melander and Pigache note that structural conflict prevention may be incorporated into development programmes and is related to poverty reduction too. Hence, they comment on the multidimensional approach that is needed in order to prevent conflict which covers "political, social, and economical features" to promote a "vibrant civil society and good governance, the protection of human rights and reintegration of former combatants as well as economic development is intended to reduce poverty that leads to grievance" (Melander and Pigache, 2007, p14).

Ramsbotham et al. (2018) note the conflict cycle and that structural conflict prevention offers two timeframes for interventions; before a conflict resorts to widespread violence and again after a ceasefire, negotiations and agreement where the focus is on preventing a relapse into violent conflict. Commenting on the EU approach, and noting the issue of pre- and post-conflict prevention, Davis (2018) notes that conflict prevention tends to fall "betwixt and between" different objectives relating to a way of acting generally in the world and a distinct set of activities for conflict prevention naming "mediation, conflict analysis and early warning" (Davis, 2018, p 166). For Ramsbotham et al. preventing the outbreak of violence involves "the satisfaction of needs, the accommodation of legitimate aspirations and the remedy of manifest injustices" (Ramsbotham et al., 2018, p146) and that this requires the creation of the conditions whereby there are "stable expectations of peaceful change" by creating "*context, structures,* and *relations* between parties that makes violence less likely" (Ramsbotham et al., 2018, p146). This does beg the question why some societies with horizontal inequalities do not descend into violent conflict. Stewart (2012) addresses this issue drawing on the work by Brown (2008) in South East Asia; she suggests that an important factor is whether, in addition to socioeconomic horizontal inequalities, there are also consistent horizontal inequalities "in the political dimension in terms of cultural recognition and status" and the nature of the state "the state tries to solve incipient problems and makes concessions if needed" (Stewart, 2012, p102). But Davis ends her assessment of EU capability, which was arguably more advanced in its thinking that in the UK, with the comment that:

> The main challenge, however, is the necessary political leadership to integrate conflict prevention into strategic decision-making, and to establish priorities, particularly for prevention over response, linking early warning with early action (Davis, 2018, p167).

Important issues have been raised for this research as it identifies the windows of opportunity for the international community. There is a strong linkage made between early warning and the political as well as socioeconomic nature of donor conflict prevention activities. There are clear indicators on the need of the international community to support the creation of conditions for a degree of accommodation resulting from horizontal inequalities if conflict prevention is to be successful, be it pre- or post-violent conflict.

2.3.4 Conflict prevention frameworks and toolbox

Normative approaches to structural conflict prevention have been developed at the international and local/state levels. At the local level scholars tend to focus on similar issues, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis. Zartman (2015) describes the early stages of conflict prevention where parties (including third parties) should focus on approaches that "create attitudes and rules for behaviour in different issue areas" (Zartman, 2015, p65). Ramsbothm et al. (2018) are more specific and focus on the main factors that have emerged from academic research and practitioners: they cite "governance, economic development, political and economic inclusiveness, the mitigation of horizontal inequalities, and the protection of human rights" (Ramsbotham et al., 2018, p155). Neither of these sources speaks much about how this might be done nor the role of third parties in their interventions.

Lund (1996) focuses more on the role of an intervenor and preventative diplomacy which is the primary focus of his book. He describes the activities as "diplomatic (in the narrow sense), military, economic and social, political-institutional, judicial-legal, and normative-ethical" (Lund, 1996, p44), describing a wide range of positive and negative[9] intervention tools from a whole-of-government perspective. Lund describes the objectives of preventative diplomacy as "medium to short term" and aim to "carry out policies and create processes to reduce tensions, resolve disputes, defuse conflicts, and head off crisis" (Lund, 1996, p43). The tools to be used would depend on how close the threat of violence was but his political tools are more negative than positive. Lund's "toolbox" (Lund, 1996, p203) and his text does not present the cooperative relationship that emerged under the New Deal and IDPS goals to address problems in cooperation with a target state.

For his part Woocher (2009) also comes up with a toolbox of techniques but asks questions as to how policy makers move from a concept of a toolbox of measures to a strategy to address conflict prevention in a specific case. The questions relate to: what mix of diplomatic, economic, legal, social and military/security measures to take; how to use cooperative versus coercive measures; how to use structural and operational prevention strategies; and the effectiveness of multilateral and unilateral strategies (Woocher, 2009, p11). Reviewing these questions Woocher notes that "the empirical literature offers surprisingly little that would help decision-makers or their advisers to these and other similar policy-relevant questions" (Woocher, 2009, p11). Other writers have added to the debate; for example, Wallensteen and Möller (2003) criticise Lund for his lack of prioritisation of his toolbox. Furthermore, quoting Sriram and Wermester, they note that when seeking to address conflict prevention the literature is still not strong enough for hypothesis development and "nothing close to a preventative theory can be distilled" (Wallensteen and Moller, 2003, p11). There is evidence that the complexity of causation, together with the range of case study specific responses by the international community, leaves a degree of counter factual evidence about what might be successful. Is it the early stage positive interventions or the later stage negative and coercive actions that are more successful? From a theoretical perspective these questions remain open. The next section addresses the more practical experience of conflict prevention and, as part of this the overlap with peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions as described in Chapter 1.

[9] Positive in the sense of supportive and cooperative with the target state/society; negative in the sense of more coercive (e.g. political pressure, sanctions, arms control).

2.4 Operationalising conflict prevention

As seen, there is little work on the experience of conducting conflict prevention. Below are a number of issues that have received attention in the literature. All have wider relevance than just conflict prevention, but these issues are of particular importance in this research as they strike a chord with some of the issues that will be identified later in the analysis.

2.4.1 DFID-sponsored research

DFID-sponsored rapid research into what interventions have been found to be effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence reported that there were only a small number of high-quality studies that shows what works and it did not constitute "a strong enough evidence base to say 'what works' in general" (Cramer et al., 2016). Nor did the research find any consensus on the impact of international peace operations or community-level peacebuilding. The reports key summary suggests that the evidence base for conflict prevention and mitigation has not advanced much since 2010; it was further suggested that the findings, covering mediation, economic development, governance, security and justice "presents major challenges for policymakers and resource allocation" (Cramer et al., 2016, p iv). This stark conclusion at the end of the tenure of the Coalition government raises real questions about the Coalition government's 2011 political intent and its subsequent translation into executable effective policy. In a similar vein, Johnson, commenting on military engagement suggests that "the chief difficulty of upstream intervention is that 'success' is notoriously difficult to assess. Tragically, failure makes itself more evident" (Johnson, 2019, p 146).

2.4.2 Sovereignty and the responsibility to protect

Sovereignty is at the basis of how the UN functions. As described in Chapter 1, the responsibility of the international community to protect those at risk within states has also become a key issue for the UN. But sovereignty brings difficulties for international intervention with respect to structural conflict prevention – particularly for positive actions where donors are seeking to work cooperatively with local elites and society to prevent conflict. In this respect, the UN Secretary General's report in 2009 on R2P emphasised the role of states to protect their populations and prevent against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. For an intervening state at an early stage and post conflict this brings in issues of sovereignty. Brown (2007) noted that Kofi Annan argued that there are "now two concepts of sovereignty, one associated with absolute internal freedom, the other conditional on good governance and respect for human rights" (Brown, 2007, p xii). Brown saw nothing new in these two concepts, but, with globalisation and a growing emphasis on human rights, Brown suggests that state sovereignty has been challenged. However, sovereignty remains a powerful deterrent to the international community from intervening; this is compounded since the UN Security Council is once again polarised. But there have been challenges to sovereignty in failing states due to: the perceived limitations of states to govern in a globalised world; and protecting human rights and UN resolutions on the responsibility to protect. There is also the long-standing perspective of self-interest and security that has both enabled and prevented interventions by other states.

There are those who have challenged the concept of sovereignty and argue for intervention. Bickerton et al. have suggested that there is "an unholy alliance" against sovereignty (Bickerton et al., 2007) led by the critical schools of thought in international relations. This "unholy alliance" challenges sovereignty based on a range of perspectives and includes: post-nationalist views of citizenship; feminism; humanitarianism; cosmopolitanism and world governance. However, Bickerton et al. question whether sovereignty is in decline with a corresponding rise in global cooperation. Bickerton specifically addresses the issue of sovereignty and statebuilding, often viewed as a key area of action in northern conflict prevention agendas. Bickerton is critical of Fukuyama and Paris for their focus on institutionalism and sequencing as, for Bickerton, sovereignty is more than a "technical problem that appears amenable to technical solutions" (Bickerton, 2007, p99). Bickerton suggests that sovereignty, as treated by those who take an institutional approach to statebuilding, becomes isolated from society. Bickerton is critical of efforts to "mechanically sever [sovereignty] from society by an external agency and then graft it back on" (Bickerton, 2007, p100). By way of example Bickerton cites the constitutional framework document for Kosovo which "explicitly relegates the 'will of the people' to only one among a number of factors that will be taken into consideration by UN officials administering the province" (Bickerton, 2007, p100). Bickerton takes the view that, despite perhaps well-intentioned efforts, statebuilding:

> … in practice … is more likely to weaken state institutions, or at the very least to build state structures that are dependent upon international support for their continued existence ... [as it] cleaves institution-building from the political life of the society in question (Bickerton, 2007, p107).

For Bickerton, and perhaps reminiscent of Leftwich's views, "internationalized state-building is ... replacing the politics of self-determination with bureaucratic rule that is dependent on external power for its survival" (Bickerton, 2007, p109).

2.4.3 Power and patronage

A second issue in relation to sovereignty is power and patronage of local actors. This section draws on the peacebuilding and statebuilding agenda but is relevant to both a pre- and post-violence conflict prevention intervention. Much of the literature is focused on post conflict but the issue is pertinent to pre conflict as well. Sending (2011) takes the view that "much of the literature on peacebuilding holds as exogenous ... the interests, behaviour, and power of local actors" (Sending, 2011, p55). Sending sees the consequence being that local actors are seen as either relatively powerless or the basis upon which external actors "cannot assume that social engineering-type of interventions will work" (Sending, 2011, p55). In short, internal actors can be blamed for any shortcomings in meeting the objectives of external peacebuilders.

Sending's key issue is the focus by academia on the power and behaviour of external actors, notwithstanding critiques of the liberal peace that emphasises local ownership, along with bottom-up approaches and hybrid forms of interventions. Sending is of the view that sovereignty, even in failing states with limited institutions, limits external actors' actions as "sovereignty itself allows for a multitude of governance practices to flourish, such as patrimonial forms of rule" (Sending, 2011, p62). Local actors, he suggests, must adapt to, and exploit, the statebuilding efforts of external actors. Quoting Englebert and Tüll, Sending

notes that "many African governments have skilfully evaded outside pressures for structural change ... and used these reforms to recalibrate their own power" (Sending, 2011, p62).

The key for Sending is the "dynamic interaction between external and internal actors" and his guiding hypothesis is that:

> Peacebuilding does not fundamentally alter the relations between political elites and their constituencies. Rather it reconfigures pre-existing governing logics (such as patronage) and accords new skills and resources to some actors" (Sending, 2011, p64).

This observation is certainly evident in the work of Hughes in Cambodia. Hughes is of the view that "the Cambodian case suggests that donor ways of working offer relatively few opportunities to the poor, and those opportunities that are offered are useful primarily to the extent that they provide a chance to ingratiate themselves with local elites in patronage relationships" (Hughes, 2013, p146). Hughes's work comes to the conclusion that the issue of power and patronage is "a significant challenge to peacebuilders who generally desire to be regarded – and to regard themselves – as partners of the poor" (Hughes, 2013, p146). Important points emerge from the discussion above: first, the concern of Hughes that peacebuilders struggle to empower the poor – in line with the limitations of democratisation; and second, Sending's view that the "central analytical question is the character of the *relationship between* actors" (Sending, 2011, quoting Jackson and Nexon, p65). This is a key political issue for the process of conflict prevention as it has been defined in this thesis.

2.4.4 Settlements

More recently the debate has refocused on elite bargaining and political settlements. For many academics and practitioners this may feel like a new direction in the wider discourses on stabilisation. However, this is not a new debate but perhaps one that is now receiving more attention again, possibly in the light of the criticisms relating to overly technical and institutional approaches to stabilisations, peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict prevention. Higley and Burton (1987) introduced the concept of elite settlements as early as 1987. In their later paper in 1998 they argued that settlements were relatively rare events and the circumstances in which settlements:

> … occur are broadly twofold: first, a background of intense, costly, but inconclusive conflict between opposing, well-organized elite camps; secondly, a new and grave political crisis which threatens to create more costly conflict without producing a clear victor and which may therefore trigger elite negotiations aimed at settling core disputes (Higley and Burton, 1998, p100).

This is clearly relevant to both pre- and post-violent conflict prevention, but at the time Higley and Burton identified few examples of elite settlements and concluded that there was no clear "structural or cultural patterns" that distinguished elite settlements from non-settlement situations. Hence, they concluded that "elite settlements are historical accidents whose watershed consequences underscore the centrality of contingent elite choices in political change" (Higley and Burton, 1998, p115). However, this work did not seem to gather much traction in academia let alone in international relations or development. There were other examples not addressed by Higley and Burton; McGerry (1998) wrote of the

Northern Ireland and South African insurgencies that both resulted in political settlements, with both cases underlining the link between political agreements and the power-sharing institutions that flowed from them.

With renewed interest in the discourse of political settlements, McGarry (2006) returned to the case of Northern Ireland and linked it to "consociational" theory of settlements with its principles of executive power sharing, autonomy of self-government in matters of cultural concern, proportionality in key public institutions and veto-rights on changes that adversely affect vital interests. McGarry and O'Leary (2006) argued that settlements can work but also noted that, in variance with the theory, "consociations do not as a matter of conceptual precision require grand coalitions. Practically, the Agreement has highlighted a mechanism, sequential portfolio allocation of executive posts using a proportionality divisor formula, that can be added to the consociational tool-box" (McGarry and O'Leary, 2006, p63).

In her review of political settlements, Ingram (2014) suggests that a new interest in settlements emerged again at the turn of the century, not in conflict prevention in unstable states but rather in northern national political contexts. Ingram noted that Khan suggests that:

> A political settlement implies an institutional structure that creates benefit for different classes and groups in line with their relative power … if underpinned at a deeper level by a viable combination of institutions and a distribution of power between organizationally powerful groups in society" (Ingram, 2014, p6, quoting from Kahn, M).

If correct, then this links the emphasis on institutions that was prevalent in northern approaches with a political settlement approach. Indeed, Ingram noted that "if a combination of power and institutions is not viable, there is not a political settlement" (Ingram, 2014, p6). Again drawing on Kahn, Ingram further noted that the viability of a political settlement is linked to a "minimum level of economic performance and political stability to hold institutional structures together" (Ingram, 2014, p6). Once again, the debate is drawn back to the Leftwich discourse on the primacy of politics and the rejection of a technocratic approach to "designing formal institutions as a development solution" (Ingram, 2014, p6). The importance of this recent work on political settlements' elite bargains is the linkage that has once again been made between politics and a technical approach. That elite bargaining is now a major part of contemporary UK government papers (Cheng et al., 2018) suggests a return to the importance of politics, but this does not necessarily indicate that conflict prevention policy development and implementation will follow in due course.

2.5 Lessons from peacebuilding and statebuilding

This section draws on the wider liberal peace, peacebuilding and statebuilding literature. Linking to the frameworks of conflict prevention outlined above, this section picks up on a number of issues that the post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding literature has covered in depth. The areas covered are provide an opportunity to cover areas that are of direct relevance to conflict prevention as well. The topics of interest are politics, governance institutions and human security.

2.5.1 Politics, interventions and development

During the research stage of this thesis the importance of politics in conflict prevention actions by intervening states became more important; it resulted in the development of the definition used in this research. This section draws on the academic literature on the issue of politics and interventions, albeit not just from a conflict prevention perspective.

Leftwich, from the early 1990s, was focused on the relationship between development and politics. He criticised the World Bank's focus on good governance which, he suggested, focused too much on "administrative, judicial or electoral good practice" and missed the point that "virtues can only be instituted and sustained by politics" (Leftwich, 1995, p421). Leftwich questioned the "contemporary preoccupation with democratic governance as a condition of development"; he argued that external conditionality would not "yield either good governance in the managerial sense or stable democracy in the liberal pluralist sense" (Leftwich, 1996, p17). For Leftwich it was not the technical and procedural aspects that determined the "character and competence of the state, but the politics which generates and sustains the state, *irrespective* of whether the state is democratic or not" (Leftwich, 1996, p5). The key point here, linking to the definition and toolbox of conflict prevention outlined in Chapter 1, is that it suggests the importance of politics in setting any conditions for further technical efforts on behalf of donors.

Early in the liberal peace project, Leftwich was challenging the way in which the United Nations, together with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Western bloc were implementing the liberal peace. Noting that the focus of the debate was wider than just post-conflict states[10], Leftwich was still raising fundamental questions for post-conflict reconstruction and development. The issues are as pertinent to pre-conflict conflict prevention and how northern states manage their interventions with undemocratic and possibly unpopular governments. But, notwithstanding these early warning signs, the institutions and states of the northern bloc had a clear view of the liberal democracies they wished to see created from the post-Cold War world.

On interventionism, Richmond (Richmond, 2014b), noted that post-Cold War integrated missions and peacebuilding interventions adopted a radically different approach, with an ambition to create a liberal state without necessarily receiving local consent. Richmond suggests a shift towards a trusteeship framework to install more progressive western "forms of politics … while enhancing regional security" (Richmond, 2014b, p509). However, Richmond (2014b) suggests that the post-Cold War approach has not been successful. Richmond (2014b) suggests that a more "impartial and non-intervening in political matters could usefully be revisited" as this would ground the practice of peacebuilding and statebuilding "on broad local consent" (Richmond, 2014b, p515). This non-intervention in political matters suggests the primacy of local ownership which was a key theme of the New Deal. On the wider liberal peace Richmond comments that "mainstream approaches aimed at ending conflict and making peace ... have reached an impasse" (Richmond, 2014a, p4). Richmond (2014a) was of the view that the outcome has been "negative forms of peace: sometimes a victor's peace" or a peace that rests on a bureaucratic approach to state development rather than "reconciliation, rights, equality and

[10] The focus at the time was on post-communist states.

justice as local political debates might recognise these" (Richmond, 2014a, p4). Richmond suggested that what was missing "is an understanding of how people and communities act to make peace themselves" as the "ordinary people and the 'everyday' are often missing from accounts of the international system" (Richmond, 2014a, p6). Again, this points to an overly technical focus on statebuilding post conflict and insufficient ongoing attention to conflict prevention as a political process. Richmond continues by asserting that this "everyday" is missing partly due to the western/Eurocentric way of thinking about power, interests and norms which tends towards thinking about "rights and institutions rather than people and needs; and partly it is because Eurocentrism indicates that subjects have little to offer the debate on peace" (Richmond, 2014a, p6).

Woodward (Woodward, 2017) also is critical of the northern concept of fragile states in that it perpetuates the post-World War two institutional system in a world that has fundamentally changed. Woodward (2017) argues that northern focus on the "ideology of failed states on lack of political will and bad governance within these countries enables the lack of policy adjustment and innovation on the international side" (Woodward, 2017, p224). Woodward (2017) argues that while there is recognition in northern ideology of the linkage between security and development, they remain separate in policy and execution. The consequences of this, Woodward argues, is that security and development policies have, in some cases, been in conflict by allowing intervening countries to prioritise "national interests over development aid" and a bias in "development aid and security assistance in favour of countries considered of strategic importance" (Woodward, 2017, p236/238). Woodward (2017) argues that the effect is that northern ideology and focus tends to result in northern donors seeking to shape fragile state solutions that they think are required rather than what "each state needs to provide domestic security and economic (and human) development rather than security for financial institutions and major powers" (Woodward, 2017, p250). Woodward argues that northern interventions bypass the recipient state except key individuals in the executive and interrupt domestic processes of state-building. Woodward argues that there is a need to analyse interventions "in operational terms, not in normative terms as is more common" (Woodward, 2017, p254). The issue for conflict prevention is that as a political process it requires a coherent whole-of-government approach by intervening states to ensure that the levers of preventative diplomacy are matched with the right levers of security and development. Woodward also strikes a chord with an issue that was to face the Coalition government; that of prioritising its efforts.

Mac Ginty (2016) writes of the idea of "political time" (constructed by military and political elites) and "sociological time" (relating to non-elites, family and society). This is picked up by Brown and Langer (2016) who note post-conflict peacebuilding is "beset by tensions" between northern political time and the realities of people-centric priorities post conflict. Using a range of examples Brown and Langer argue that "wholesale and rapid transformation of post-conflict societies into liberal democracies with open economies, has been largely discredited" (Brown and Langer, 2016, p449). They argue for more people-centred approaches, noting that the OECD[11] has already moved in this direction (in 2007). However, Brown and Langer argue against rapid institutional reform in favour of a "longer-term strategy of community engagement and citizenship-building", which are evident in the OECD principles, but "de-prioritized in favour of institutional reform" (Brown and Langer, 2016, p450). The issue for Brown and Langer is not the normative principles that are

[11] OECD-DAC 2007 – Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations.

emerging in organisations like the OECD, and often repeated in donor policy as well (see Chapter 4), but how these ideas are subsequently operationalised and prioritised not least due to the exigencies of donor political time. As will be seen, Coalition policy development tends to continue the normative thread of policy development.

2.5.2 Statebuilding, democracy and institutions

Both pre- and post-conflict prevention activities are likely to take place within a given context of a political system and some form of institutions, no matter how fragile the state. Intervening states will need to operate within this context, albeit possibly with ambitions to change the context. The BSOS recognised this issue and was steering away from earlier post-Cold War statebuilding approaches by an acceptance of the need to work with what was available locally. But one still sees evidence of northern donors focusing on northern processes, systems and institutions. Indeed, as will be seen in Chapter 4, the upstream pillar of the BSOS is heavily weighted towards institutional approaches with a heavy overlap with statebuilding. Hence this debate is important as it helps to explain the UK government's approach to structural conflict prevention policy development.

Early scholarly comments on the liberal peace reflected the political imperative for the development of democracy in fragile states. The political emphasis on democracy, typified in Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* and reflected in the rhetoric of northern politician, was an underpinning feature of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding. This section explores the evolving nature of the debate regarding the role of democracy and statebuilding. This debate is wide-ranging and extensive and has important implications for UK policy, strategy and programmes as it impacts the way in which the UK might use its interventions in support of conflict prevention.

Regarding democracy, Dahl (2000) took a process-orientated view suggesting five standards required for democratic association: "effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion of adults" (Dahl, 2000, p37). He further identifies "essential" conditions for democracy which included: "control of the military/police by elected officials; democratic beliefs and political culture; and no strong foreign control hostile to democracy". Dahl also identifies "favourable" conditions for democracy which include a market economy and the absence of "sub cultural pluralism" (Dahl, 2000, p147). However, in summing up his views on the progress of democracy, Dahl feared that the twenty-first century would find that, as democracy is "rare to human experience", democratic states would be "destined to be replaced by non-democratic systems"; he suggests that democracy might become "broader in reach and shallower in depth" (Dahl, 2000, p180).

With regard to institutions, Fukuyama commented that "the conventional wisdom, that institutions are the critical variable in development, now stands backed by a host of studies" (Fukuyama, 2004, p30). With a similar emphasis on institutions, Call and Cousens contend that "experience of dozens of recent international involvements has increasingly shown that rebuilding or establishing at least minimally functioning state institutions is essential to peace building" (Call and Cousens, 2008, p9). In a later paper, having been heavily criticised, Call comments that there is confusion in the understanding of capacity as it "refers both to scope (the range of functions...) and strength (the ability to deliver...) (Call, 2011, p306). Call suggests that the World Bank list of "minimal functions", which includes

defence, law and order, public health, macroeconomic management and disaster relief is generally agreed upon as the priority areas for capacity building (Call, 2011, p306). Again, this is important for the technical approach of conflict prevention.

While the objectives of institutional capacity building might have wide support, Richmond is more critical of progress. Using examples in Bosnia, Cambodia, Kosovo, the Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste, Richmond noted that "state building ... has produced weak institutions" and "human development indices have barely improved ... while the Gini index[12] has often increased" (Richmond, 2013, p5/6). Quoting a UN report after a return to violence in Timor Leste in 2006, Richmond notes that the "underlying causes of the crisis were 'political and institutional' as the reforms implemented had failed to address the 'underlying causes or identity issues'" (Richmond, 2013, p5/6). Richmond contends that international organisations have had to conclude that the statebuilding project can at best achieve "'good enough' outcomes betraying a certain weariness with the constant weaknesses of state building applications" (Richmond, 2013, p10). He contends that international organisations underestimated the "nature of elite power in a range of areas less easily captured by realist, liberal institutionalist, problem-solving or critical approaches" (Richmond, 2013, p10). Richmond uses Tilly's framework to assess capacity and democracy (Tilly, 2007, p19); he suggests that policy makers were responding to the need to bring in "conceptions of local ownership and participation" but the liberal peace has resulted in "a few high-capacity undemocratic states, some low-capacity and undemocratic states, no high capacity and democratic states and many low-capacity and democratic ones" (Richmond, 2013, p17).

Baker focuses upon elections which feature prominently in post-conflict interventions but also play a part in all states of conflict prevention. Baker suggests that there are two approaches amongst the peacemakers (albeit she recognises that they do not manifest themselves in a pure form). First, she identifies the "conflict managers" who are primarily pragmatists seeking conflict resolution and tend to emphasise "process", "moral equivalence" among factions and "the neutrality of outside actors". Second, she identifies the "democratizers" who see themselves as principled actors in the process and are more focused on "justice" and "accountability" with regards to outcome (Baker, 2012, p382). She notes that these two approaches do result in different "definitions of success and employ different strategies" that impact on election outcomes and hence in turn can impact the democratisation process. Accepting that an election is "the linchpin of legitimate authority" (Baker, 2012, p379) and that they are often the first post-conflict political contest, Baker notes that it is essential that they are seen to be fair. The need for fairness is particularly so if there is no formal political settlement – as has been the case in numerous post-Cold War northern interventions. However, reflecting Baker's strategies, Kumar suggests that part of the problem for international organisations is that elections have "multiple objectives to prevent the recurrence of hostilities, promote political reconciliation and initiate the process of democratization"; yet elections are often held in a "highly unfavourable environment" (Kumar, 2000, p192). Kumar identifies a range of problems with elections, and with particular reference to "initiating the process of democratization" he lists: the "unrealistic time frame" (e.g. Cambodia); "limited attention to electoral systems"; and "limited focus on political requisites" (Kumar, 2000, p202-7).

[12] A measure of inequality within a state.

In summary, building institutions in post-conflict states, often with much reduced human capital with the right skills, has proved far more problematic than had been anticipated. Nor has there been the willingness on the part of the international community to provide the resources to grow institutional capability that could take 20 years – if the conditions are right. If institutions are a key aspect of conflict prevention intervention, then this has implications for policy makers. For conflict prevention, if one accepts the evidence of Stewart and Brown on political representation and levels of violence, the bar of achievement of representation to address horizontal (and vertical) inequalities is much lower. As will be seen, this was one area that the Coalition government did take note as there is a direct reference to working with existing democratic elements rather than seeking to impose a particular northern model, although still with an emphasis on the democratic. Institutions remain a cornerstone of activity for the Coalition government within their conflict prevention strategy.

2.6 Conclusion

A key issue for this research is the critique of past international efforts at conflict prevention. This literature review demonstrated the limited research available on conflict prevention policy development at the time of the Coalition government. However, the research on conceptual frameworks and the issues of political engagement and sovereignty helps to focus attention on the way in which Coalition policy developed (Chapters 3 and 4). A second general theme is that, from a donor perspective, there is little evidence of what works in conflict prevention. Recent studies presented above are signposting ideas as to how northern approaches might change. However, what is not evident in any detail is the whole-of-government practical issues associated with policy development and policy execution, from a donor perspective, in order to support states and societies in preventing violent conflict. The literature review does allow lessons from practical experience, albeit from the overlapping concepts of peacebuilding, statebuilding and development. This contributes to the analysis of Coalition government actions in the two policy implementation studies examined (Chapter 6 and 7). Overall, this literature review has demonstrated a gap in knowledge in the difficulties faced by governments wishing to develop their policy and the ability to support conflict prevention in other states. That gap in the literature continues through to the present as there are few policy implementation studies into the policy development and practice by potential intervening states. One of the contributions of this thesis is to understand why it has been difficult to translate clear political intent into effective policy and action.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology for the thesis. This research is part reflective on the impact of Whitehall policy as I drew on a 35-year career engaged in conflict prevention and stabilisation military operations in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Darfur/Sudan, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan serving with both the British Army and as part of a United Nations force. The chapter begins by explaining my own positionality in relation to the research question and how this influenced the wording of the research question. The chapter then explains the mixed methods approach to the research covering three aspects: literature review; qualitative analysis of a range of government and departmental policy, Hansard, and other government/departmental documents; and interviews focused on two distinct groups - those involved in policy development and those involved in the execution of policy. Particular attention is played to the way in which policy theory supports the empirical approach. The chapter also addresses the selection of two policy implementation studies: the rational for the studies to support the research; and how and why the countries were selected. Finally, the chapter addresses the limitations of the research method.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological approach and the application of the principles of qualitative methods.

This section addresses the philosophical approach that has influenced this thesis. Drawing on the literature (Lowndes et al., 2017, Marsh et al., 2017, Bates and Jenkins, 2007, Carter and Little, 2007, Becker, 1996) ontological and epistemological assumptions have provided a framework for this research. Ontological and epistemological clarity is important as they shape "what it is we think we are doing" and "what we think we can claim from our results" (Lowndes et al., 2017, p 173). However, one also notes the comments of Lowndes et al that "the discussion of epistemological and ontological issues is itself an area of dispute and controversy within political science" (Lowndes et al., 2017, p 173). Indeed, to emphasis this point, commenting on an early edition of Lowndes et al's book, Bates and Jenkins had commented that "ontological and epistemological definitions …… are inconsistent and consequently sometimes inaccurate" (Bates and Jenkins, 2007, p 58)[13]. Hence, in this thesis, I have not sought to enter the debate on ontology and epistemology, rather seek to draw on basic concepts to guide the research approach. In this respect, at times, I have fallen back on my research methods basics (Walliman, 2011) that has helped me throughout the project.

Noting that ontology "precedes epistemology" (Hay, 2006, p 8) and noting that this research is part reflective on my own experience, the thought process tends towards inductive reasoning (Walliman, 2011, p 17). From the outset of this research, it was clear from experience that gaining a complete deductive reasoned perspective on the issues encountered on policy development and implementation would not be possible. However, in this research I was confident that inductive reasoning would be effective as it was drawing primarily on empirical evidence based on observation, backed up by interview and the learning from others, synthesised together with my own experience of policy, policy development and implementation. It was also noted that inductive reasoning does also mean

[13] Due to time and Covid19 movement restrictions is has not been possible to research whether these inconsistencies claimed by Bates and Jenkins have been addressed. However, the 2017 edition produced by Lowndes et al does acknowledge disputes and controversy.

that conclusions could be wrong. Nonetheless, inductive reasoning was seen as the most appropriate way forward.

Given the above, the next issue was one of epistemology which is concerned with all aspects of the "validity, scope, and method of acquiring knowledge" (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p 1171). Epistemology addresses "what constitutes a knowledge claim; how knowledge can be produced or acquired; and how the extent of its applicability can be determined" (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p 1171). Noting again the broad spectrum of language in the classification of approaches (Moon and Blackman, 2014, Marsh et al., 2017, Lowndes et al., 2017, Walliman, 2011), of the two broad approaches, positivism and relativism (also referred to as interpretivism and constructivism), this project has adopted a relativist (or interpretivist) epistemology.

In this research the two main sources of information were documents and interviews. From these sources it was necessary to construct an understanding of the Coalition government's intent, policy and execution. The problem with the approach, already touched on earlier, was the acknowledgement that the data collection was most likely to be incomplete and subjective. There was always great room for bias on my part and on the part of those being interviewed. Hence, throughout the research it was necessary to keep in mind this limitation. However, this approach also allowed me to "reveal different interpretations of the world as made by people" (Walliman, 2011, p 22) rather than the development of some universal generalization.

This interpretative, mainly qualitative (see below) research approach allowed me to address cross-cultural differences (between the FCO, DFID and MOD as well as third parties) that were obvious in my own experience and needed to be examined in relation to this research question. Again, it was noted that this approach, being subjective and value laden and, drawing on inductive reasoning, has the weakness of drawing conclusions that may not be reliable if there are insufficient observations. This in itself helped shape the interview plan and those who would be targeted. This was important as "understanding different interpretation of the world made by people" (Walliman, 2011, p 22) was in itself an important part of this research project. It was inevitable that in interview, and in government and other reports, people would "impose meaning and value on the world and interpret it in a way that makes sense to them" (Crotty 1998; Pratt, 1998, quoted in - Moon and Blackman, 2014, p 1172). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions would prove to be ideal for this research project and this allowed me to place myself within the context of the interviewees experience at the same time drawing on my own experience to develop issues as they were discussed. This was important as the reasons for failure to implement government intent were multiple and viewed/weighted differently by different actors. This research project was designed to capture this issue and seek to make sense of the observations and empirical evidence.

Resulting from this epistemological approach, the tendency was therefore towards a qualitative analysis of the data. Using qualitative data collection, the aim was to gain insights and understanding on issues relating to the why policy emerged as it did and how this impacted the implementation of policy. The aim was to get to the underlying reasons and motivations of actors involved in policy development and execution. It was not an exercise in assessing the policy documents and the outcome of projects. This is not to suggest that a positivist, quantitative approach does not have its place. Where available I have drawn on

quantitative measures where appropriate. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in a mixed methods strategy is described in more detail below.

3.3 Research method

This section sets out the development of the research question and research method. This project began in 2014 when I first read the Coalition government's BSOS. From the outset it seemed to me that the positioning of the upstream conflict prevention pillar of strategy was out of place and had not developed well; hence my research question which asks why the UK found it difficult to implement effective structural conflict prevention policies. I was keen to research the way the Coalition government followed through from the initial statements in the upstream pillar to departmental policy, and subsequently to get some feel for how policy was being executed in target countries with local and international partners – noting that structural conflict prevention is a long-term activity.

From the beginning of the project my focus was on three issues; understanding what was contained in the upstream policy; understanding how policy had developed; and understanding how policy was being executed. At the PhD Confirmation Viva the briefed research method was a discourse analysis together with semi-structured interviews with those involved in making policy. At the time it was commented by one of the examiners that without achieving access to the policy makers this research project was at risk; this was acknowledged (subsequently a sufficient degree of access was achieved).

The research method adopted was therefore a mixed methods approach. With my professional background in operations, and as a pragmatist by nature, adopting a mixed methods approach using quantitative and qualitative approaches was the best fit for my skills. Drawing on the literature, for example, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), a mixed methods approach offered the opportunity to include "the use of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one's results" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p17). It was also noted that Johnson and Onwuegbuzie spell out in detail the strengths and weaknesses of mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative research methods in their paper. Of particular interest for this research, offered by mixed method, was that this approach would, as argued by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, allow the researcher to "answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p21). The weaknesses of the approach were also noted, particularly the "problems of paradigm mixing, how to qualitatively analyse quantitative data and how to interpret conflicting results" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p21). The way in which the mixed methods approach was executed is set out below in more detail.

3.3.1 Secondary research questions and research streams

In order to answer the research question, this thesis takes the upstream policy themes developed in the BSOS and other documents as a given[14] and the basis for addressing how the UK government and its departments then aimed to support structural conflict prevention. Using the upstream themes secondary questions were developed which then formed the basis

[14] That is not to accept HMG's approach as best practice or the most appropriate actions for structural conflict prevention, but they represent the approach adopted by the Coalition government.

for the analysis of policy development, for interviews and for the policy implementation studies that were conducted. Taken together these secondary research questions would need to be addressed by more than one method; hence the need for quantitative and qualitative analysis and interviews.

From the outset, the research was divided into four streams: literature review; policy development analysis of government source documents; policy implementation studies; and, complementing documentary analysis, interviews of appropriate stakeholders. The literature review had already identified the conceptual nature of structural conflict prevention and frameworks that could be adopted. The literature review also had identified issues that needed to be considered when assessing the translation of Coalition government intent into policy and actions. With knowledge from the literature review, together with the known themes of the Coalition government for upstream conflict prevention, these secondary research questions, focused on the themes of government policy, provided a basis upon which to begin examining the government documents and prepare for the interviews.

Table 3.1 – UK government upstream key themes

Serial	Theme	Question
1	UK government political intent	• To what extent did high-level political intent, as described in BSOS for upstream conflict prevention, become translated into departmental actions during the period of the Coalition government? • What were the key factors that drove the move towards upstream engagement?
2	upstream objectives	• What upstream objectives were developed and were they appropriate? • Were these objectives driven politically both from a UK and local target country level? • Was there a joint approach donor/recipient?
3	Whole-of-government	• How did whole-of-government engagement and delivery improve at the departmental and country level?
4	Institutional governance and capacity	• How did the emphasis on institutional and governance capacity translate into conflict prevention programmes and projects?
5	Realism	• How realistic were the aims and objectives? • How did programmes and projects support the overall government approach in terms of: outputs/outcomes; timeframe; local engagement; skills; commitment?
6	Partnerships	• How well did the government form partnerships to execute its policy, programmes and projects?
7	UNSCR 1325	• How did the UK Action Plan translate into structural conflict prevention measures?

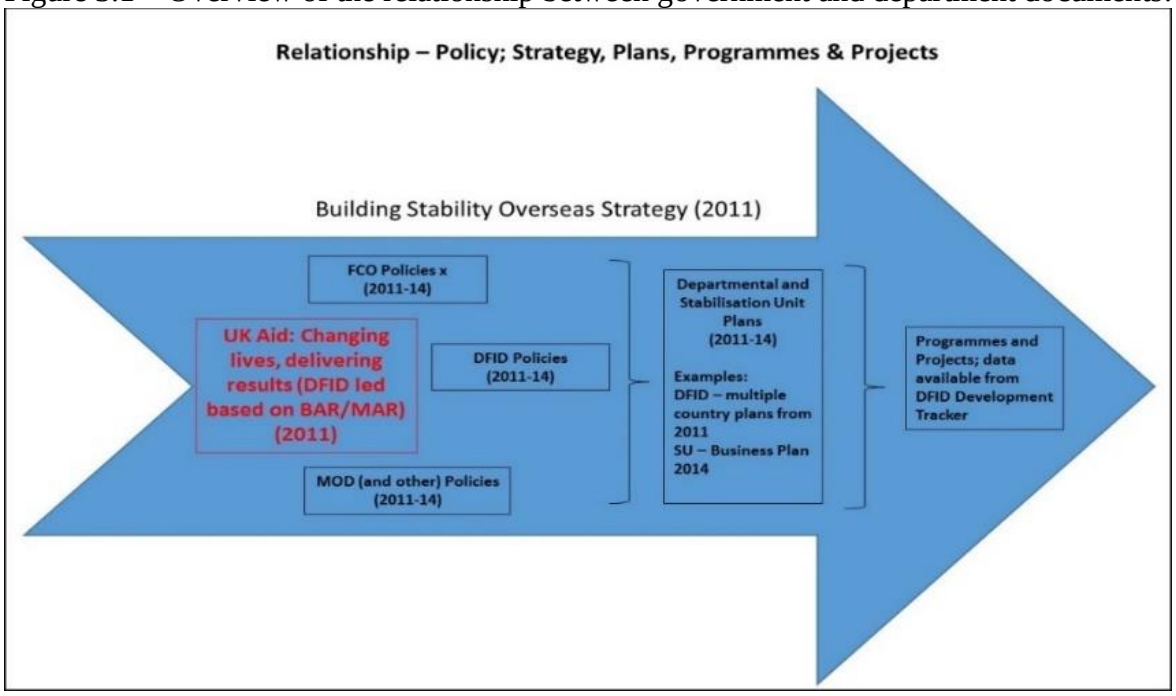
3.3.2 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis was used primarily in two areas: understanding the funding of the Coalition government's efforts towards upstream conflict prevention and the implications thereof; and drawing on quantitative data from Hansard to identify areas of ministerial interest and focus.

3.3.3 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis formed much of the data and evidence gathering. Hansard, policy documents and reports (Parliament and government) were all analysed using Nvivo. In all, some 40+ policy documents were reviewed with the aim of identifying the ends, ways and means by which the Coalition government developed and executed the intent set out in BSOS. These policy documents are listed at Annex A and the relationship between policy, strategy and plans is summarised in Figure 3.1, noting that this does not include preventative diplomacy through individual contacts.

Figure 3.1 – Overview of the relationship between government and department documents.



The first task was to understand the content of the Coalition government published policy documents as there is no single source that provides any form of understanding of government conflict prevention policy. Given the issues identified in Chapters 1 and 2 associated with a conceptual understanding of structural conflict prevention, and the potential for all and any programme and project to be justified under this broad heading, it is not surprising that conflict prevention policy is not neatly package in a government and inter-departmental set of policies and plans. Unpicking the policy, and subsequently in the execution phase, the political activity together with the supporting programmes and plans for upstream, was not straight forward. This task was divided into two phases: source collection and source analysis.

3.3.3.1 Sources

The primary policy analysis sources were available online in Hansard and on government departmental websites. When the research began in 2014, I began collecting departmental policy papers at that time and downloading them into an Endnote library. These source documents built into a library of 1,044 academic papers, institutional reports, and policy documents. Government documents were sourced from departmental websites (including Development Web for project-related reports) and Hansard. Beginning to collect government policy documents before the end of the Coalition government meant that when the policy papers began to be altered after the election in 2015, I still had available the Coalition government documents. Policy documents were not the only source of departmental information; business plans and project briefs were also collected as these provided information on the execution of policy. In addition, conflict prevention reports were sourced from global institutions (UN, World Bank, EU), think tanks and academic institutions and INGOs (mainly in the UK but this widened with respect to the policy implementation studies), with a particular focus on conflict prevention.

3.3.3.2 Analysis and the use of Nvivo

Given the number of government policy documents and references to conflict prevention in Hansard, Nvivo was used as a tool to aid analysis. The way in which this was carried out is explained in detail below. The results of the analysis then informed the empirical chapters particularly Chapters 4 and 5.

It is worth recalling an issue identified in Chapter 1 on the relationship between poverty reduction and conflict prevention as "it is difficult to distinguish prevention from other types of peace operation" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p393) and "virtually anything that the UN does can be rehatted as conflict prevention in order to show conformity to the new mandate or appeal to certain donors" (Rubin and Jones, 2007, p401); this issue is equally applicable to UK actions to support structural conflict prevention. A key question therefore was what policy should be analysed and what implementation action should be tracked. Given this issue, the analysis in this research seeks to align with the government intent as set out in the BSOS. Hence, the focus of effort was on those areas that were emphasised in the BSOS: political settlements; governance; institutions; and human security.

The documents listed at Annex A were sourced by trawling through government and government department websites. Fortunately, DFID and the Stabilisation Unit were particularly thorough in placing their documents on the web. The MOD and FCO were less forthcoming but it was discovered that their annual reports (some to Parliament) also included information relating to policy. Policy documents and reports were downloaded and captured in an Endnote library. For the implementation studies source information was accessed through DFID's Development Tracker website; again, a trawl of the website using its search tools identified projects in the two countries in the period of interest. Hansard and its search tool were used to identify written statements, speeches and debates of relevance. Searches were conducted on the names and dates of interest of key individuals (the secretaries of state for example) and key words (e.g. fragile state and conflict prevention). As material of interest was identified so it was captured in pdf documents and downloaded into the Endnote library. The list of Parliamentary committees was reviewed and those of potential relevance were investigated further in order to identify committee reports and government responses to issues. Again, the results were downloaded into the Endnote library. Report of supporting organisations (e.g. ICAI, Africa APPG and NAO) were also investigated and reports captured in the library. This resulted in some 300 documents published between 2008 and 2018 in the Endnote library.

The next task was to assess the extent to which the policy documents provided policy direction for upstream conflict prevention. A sift of the documents identified produced a list of documents that were of particular interest to the research; these documents were then imported into Nvivo. Different Nvivo files were established for the various tasks covering policy, Hansard statements and the two implementation studies. The policy analysis was a combination of documentary discourse analysis supported by some quantitative data analysis using Nvivo. Initially, each document was coded to identify subjects and phrases of interest. Nodes were set up to categorise the identified statements that provide evidence of Government and departmental objectives; attention to any SMART[15] objectives. Note was also be taken of normative policy statements that do not imply any action or guidance but

[15] SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

express best practice without any inferred action. An example of the nodes used for government policy analysis is at Annex B Figure B-1. Note that for this analysis, in addition to identifying UK objectives and processes, statements that were relevant to the IDPS peacebuilding and statebuilding goals were also coded. This was done as the IDPS goals were being kept in mind as an international baseline of agreed action in accordance with the Busan agreement in 2011. The identified statements were then grouped, and Nvivo reports were run off which were used to identify themes of policy, the number of observations, together with the clarity of intent. This data provided evidence of how strong the theme featured in the policy and the degree of clarity of intent. It was from this analysis that deductions were developed that were then included in the various chapters.

In conducting the discourse analysis, note was also taken on whether objectives were inputs, outputs or outcomes[16]. It should be noted that outcomes, in the context of international development aid, let alone outcomes in states of fragility, can often only be achieved with a strong partnership with other international actors – seldom can UK achieve outcomes alone. Nonetheless, there is real value in understanding the extent of UK's ambition and commitment to its partner southern states.

The same process was undertaken for the Hansard written statements and speeches. The information was drawn from the list of documents listed in Annex B Figure B-2. As the aim was to understand how the story of the policy developed over time in Parliament the nodes used were by month/year. Reports were produced and analysed resulting in information being included into the chapters as required. Finally, the third use of the document analysis related to the implementation studies. From the Endnote library documents of interest were identified and imported into Nvivo for coding; the coding used is included at Annex B Figure B-3. The aim was to cover the key themes identified by the Coalition government for action in the upstream pillar of BSOS. Again, reports were produced from the Nvivo search, and useful information incorporated into the chapters as appropriate.

3.3.3.3 Good policy for conflict prevention

Finally, in relation to qualitative analysis, while conducting the analysis it was necessary to keep in mind what makes good policy and strategy. Setting out his ten commandments for good policy, Lord O'Donnell's first commandment is "thou shalt be clear about the outcomes that you want to achieve" (O'Donnell, 2012). But an Institute for Government report in 2011 noted that "earlier reform attempts [to improve policy] delivered only limited improvements because they failed to take account of the real world of policy making" (Hallsworth and Rutter, 2011, p8). Reflecting O'Donnell, the report suggests that there needs to be "greater clarity from ministers on their high-level policy goals" and departments need to work "together to produce shared analysis to allow ministers to focus on political choices" (Hallsworth and Rutter, 2011, p6-7). In relation to development policy Mosse has taken a different view and suggests that suggested that "policy legitimizes and mobilizes political and practical support" but is less concerned about the detail of the ends

[16] An input is defined in terms of the action/resource used by UK government agents in order to achieve some change – it could be staff effort. An output is the end result of an action usually in the form of a measurable tangible result – it could be a school. An outcome tends to have more than just a tangible output but is likely to achieve some intangible and ideally lasting change – it could be increased number of children achieving a level of education.

and ways which need to be more flexible given the uncertainties of development aid (Mosse, 2004, p663). These views on policy will be seen throughout this thesis and link with policy theory to assist in assessing the content policy, business cases and how BSOS was translated into effect.

Turning to strategy, as will be seen, there is much discussion on HMG's strategy for fragile states and country approaches. However, it became clear that the very concept of strategy was nuanced and found wanting, and this thesis raises questions regarding strategy at the national, country and programme level. But an issue that does arise is the understanding of what is strategy and how it assists the translation of policy into effect.

Hew Strachan (2013), a military historian, provides useful insights into the link between strategy and policy. Strategy, Strachen suggests, "may not enable us to see to the end of the century, but it should at least help us along its next three decades or so" (Strachan, 2013, p257). However, Strachen takes the view that too often today policy, which "occupies the domain of contingency ... [and is] subject to the competing dynamics of politics" (Strachan, 2013, p 258) is confused with strategy. Strachen is concerned that the blurring of the strategy and policy boundary results in strategy having to be "prudent and far-seeing while also being contingent and adaptive" (Strachan, 2013, p258). While strategy for Strachen occupies the domain of war, his point is still relevant to wider use today and the relationship between the UK government's policies and strategies in fragile states.

A more academic view of strategy is offered by Richard Rumelt (Rumelt, 2012) who suggests that good strategy contains three elements: a diagnosis, a guiding policy and coherent action, commenting that strategy is "like a sign-post, marking the direction forward but not defining the details of the trip" (Rumelt, 2012, p7). Bad strategy, Rumelt comments "may actively avoid analysing obstacles" or "by mistakenly treating strategy work as an exercise in goal setting rather than problem solving. Or they may avoid hard choices because they do not want to offend anyone (Rumelt, 2012, p7-8).

But Lord Ricketts, one-time chair of the National Security Committee established by the Coalition government, suggests that politicians no longer think strategically and are constantly drawn to the "tyranny of the immediate" (Ricketts, 2019). In the context of upstream it requires politicians to have that long strategic view and direct policy and execution accordingly. However, with the interconnected digital world, with events moving at an international pace not imagined in days of strategic thinking of empire, politicians and civil servants tend to be constantly anchored to the "now". A three- or even a five-year financially driven perspective, with changes of direction with each government and the impact of deployed UK staff rotations, is not a strategic approach.

3.3.3.4 Using policy theory

Early on in the research it became clear that indicators of policy theory helped to bring out attributes of each of the theoretical approaches. In order to assist analysis, and the writing of the thesis, an *aide memoire* was developed that was used throughout the research to help identify the link between source data (including interviews) and theory; this *aide memoire* can be found in Table 3.2. The indicators are drawn directly from my reading of the theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter 1 and the ideas of good policy and strategy

outlined above. The source of each of the indicators is annotated in the *aide memoire*[17], which helped to cross-reference to the source of the ideas that formed the indicator.

Keeping these indicators in mind throughout the research and during the writing of this thesis helped to identify the likely approach to policy development and policy execution and hence pointed to some of the strengths and weaknesses of a given approach. The table below is referred to in later chapters to draw attention to the linkage between theory and practice. One final point on the use of policy theory is that, given the apparent normative nature of the policy documents, and towards the end of the research project, the idea of policy as political symbolism became apparent. Policy therefore was also considered from the perspective of the way in which public officials respond to popular concerns with policies aimed at meeting demand for solutions rather than necessarily addressing the real problem (Temby, 2015, referencing Murray Edelman Political Language and Political Reality (1985), Edelman, 1985). However, the evidence of this approach was not strong, so the use of this theory was not developed further.

Table 3.2 – Theories and indicators *aide memoire*

Models	Indicators
Rational	1. Clarity of outcome (O'Donnell) 2. Clarity on determinants of success (O'Donnell 3. Inter-departmental – collective buy-in (O'Donnell) 4. No rush to legislate – last resort (O'Donnell) 5. Evidence based (O'Donnell) 6. Clear accountability (O'Donnell) 7. Clear ends linked to means 8. Research follows policy objectives (Young et al.); policy shapes research agenda (but can be research led)
Incremental	1. Objectives adjusted to available means; policy directed at a problem with no fixed objectives (Hill, 2005) 2. Policy tried, altered and tried again … (Hill on Lindblom, 2005) 3. Effective learning (Schon, 1973) 4. Addressing the effectiveness but not the appropriateness of actions (Schon, 1973) 5. Learning as experiments – nine threats to validity (Campbell, 1969) 6. Policy as justification for projects (Mosse, 2004) 7. Compromise – joint analysis leading to lowest common denominator (Barakat & Waldman, 2013)
Problems, Politics & Policy	1. Events which demand "new ideas" (Schon, 1973) 2. Ideas given legitimacy by being taken up by powerful people (Schon, 1973) 3. Problem recognised, proposals available (Kingdon, 1984) 4. Focusing event (Kingdon, 1984) 5. Policy window (Kingdon, 1984) 6. Political window (Kingdon, 1984) 7. No follow through (Kingdon, 1984) 8. Compromise – joint analysis leading to lowest common denominator (Barakat & Waldman, 2013)
Street-level bureaucrats	1. Policy is ambiguous (Lipsky, 1980) 2. Street-level practitioners have discretion to develop and implement policy (Brodkin, 2012) 3. Street-level practitioners are acting politically (Brodkin, 2012) 4. Act as interface between government and policy target (Brodkin, 2012)

[17] Note; "street-level bureaucrats" was introduced during the Nepal policy implementation study as the issue was identified; policy transfer was included much later during the corrections and hence has not been added to the *aide memoire* used during the research.

3.3.4 Interviews: policy and implementation

Interviews played a key part in the research and the approach to interviews is covered in more detail at Annex B. Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted between January 2017 and November 2019 with politicians (government and committee members), departmental officials focusing on Whitehall and the country team level, NGO officials (London-based policy directors), and implementation officials (both UK and local) and academics. The target for the interviews for policy development was on those involved at the time and efforts were made to access those involved at all levels. This was broadly achieved and the final list of contacts (interviews and email) included: two secretaries of state; an FCO minister; a member of a key Parliamentary committee; officials from the FCO, DFID and MOD; and NGO policy officials. For the policy implementation studies the target was those involved (officials, consultants and NGOs) in the execution of policy and those involved from the target states; this latter target proved more difficult although some results were achieved. Other sources included speeches and articles written by other key stakeholders.

The focus of effort was on Whitehall and understanding how policy emerged and how it impacted officials in target states – hence the policy implementation studies. Given this focus of research, the main target was capturing the perspective of senior stakeholders, although gaining balance access across different stakeholder groups was difficult (there was more success with senior politicians and NGO policy directors than senior civil servants). Access to middle-ranking civil servants was more successful. The broad areas for investigation that were pursued were: how Whitehall worked together; how policy evolved particularly with respect to top-down or bottom-up development; who influenced whom and where did the drive and direction come from; how did experience of conflict prevention impact policy; how did policy influence programmes and priorities; how was the policy executed at a country level.

3.4 Policy implementation studies

Although the primary focus of this research was on policy development in Whitehall, it was essential to examine how policy was being executed by UK officials in target states. Indeed, there is clear evidence that DFID country teams were significantly contributing to the development of policy; this can be seen from the way in which DFID conducted their 2011 Bilateral Aid Review set out in DFID's technical report (DFID, 2011b). The purpose of the policy implementation studies and how the target countries were selected is set out below.

3.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the policy implementation studies was to examine how policy was being developed and implemented in different situations. Unlike normal case studies, the aim was not to compare what was happening in, for example, two countries, but to compare the approach Whitehall was taking to developing policy for each country and how that policy was being executed in each country.

The policy implementation studies for this research were also linked to the theoretical approach of the thesis. The aim was to consider the policy development and implementation process in two countries that might have experienced policy development from different theoretical approaches. For example, in a country that the UK had long involvement, it

might be reasonable to expect that policy and strategy would continue to evolve incrementally. But, if a new problem emerged in another country then one might expect that an alternative theoretical approach might be seen – for example, problems, politics and policy. It was with these points in mind that the process of selecting countries for study was carried out.

Studies of conflict prevention and conflict resolution have been addressed before. From a military perspective Richards and Mills published *Victory Among People: Lessons from Countering Insurgency and Stabilising Fragile States* (Richards, 2014). This work is a series of case studies of conflict states that focus on "insurgencies". On the other hand, Farrell and Schmitt in their study *The Causes, Character and Conduct of Armed Conflict, and the Effects on Civilian Populations 1990–2010* take a wider perspective and focus on "a broader range of violent actors and activity [that includes] political, economic and personal gain" (Farrell and Schmitt, 2012, p28). However, case studies that focus on the role of a donor in contributing to the long-term goal of structural conflict prevention are less common. This is perhaps unsurprising, not least because of the continuing lack of long-term commitment by donors as evidenced in UN, World Bank and other international organisations' reports.

Considering how a donor might contribute to conflict prevention can be developed from multiple perspectives. Technical project and programme reviews have been carried out by multiple organisations including the OECD, ICAI and UK government internal departmental reviews. But this research seeks to move beyond a technical review and, in line with the definition of conflict prevention, explore how the UK government approach created the political conditions for the technical programmes to be successful. Hence, the approach in this research is to use country studies to address how the UK government changed the way it executed its involvement in structural prevention as developed in the BSOS and how this impacted on the technical approach. Therefore, this research is not just about projects. Rather, this research is about whether, in line with the BSOS strategic intent, the UK government's high-level direction created the conditions for the UK to play its part in upstream conflict prevention, and how that played out.

In order to assess which policy implementation studies provide the best comparison a number of criteria, or variables, were identified as important in guiding the selection of states (and regions) to study. These variables were:

- Countries emerging from endogenous conflict and at risk of returning to widespread violence as this has been the major driver of conflict;

- The length of time that the UK government has been involved in a particular country as this indicates a degree of long-term commitment;

- The linkage (or lack of it and implications thereof) with UK security as this was a key driver for international development under the Coalition government;

- The size and scope of the UK government's involvement in terms of resources as this is the other way in which the UK has "skin in the game" particularly in a time of austerity at home and controversy surrounding an increase to the aid budget.

- The potential for a balance of theoretical approaches that reflected the two main theories that were being considered; incremental policy development and problems, politics and policy theory.

3.4.2 Policy implementation study selection process

The rationale for the selection is set out below. This research selected South Sudan and Nepal as policy implementation studies. South Sudan provides a unique opportunity to examine how the UK supported a nation borne out of a wider civil war and which only achieved formal independence in 2011, albeit a situation that changed with the outbreak of civil war in 2013. South Sudan was selected as a pilot partner state for the UK in 2011 as part of the New Deal. The UK had been engaged directly in the emergence of South Sudan as one of the three key "Troika" countries that assisted in the peace process between North and South Sudan. Furthermore, South Sudan offered the prospect examining the problems, politics and policy theoretical approach. Nepal offers the opportunity to conduct a complementary study in a different region. The UK has had a long-standing relationship with Nepal which, since 2008, has been emerging from civil war. The UK government had been involved in stabilisation operations in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. Therefore, it is worth examining how this developed and then what impact the Coalition government's policy had as Nepal was again specifically mentioned in the BSOS upstream section. In addition, given the long-standing relationship and evolving policy and strategy towards Nepal, it offered the opportunity to examine how policy was developing and being executed from the perspective of incremental development of policy.

It could be argued that neither of these policy implementation studies involve target countries which were material to UK's security or economic interests. Hence, there is good reason for these countries to have received far less attention than might have been the case. However, the UK's "skin in the game" was the millions of pounds of taxpayers' money that was being used to conduct governance and institutional reform programmes aimed at stabilisation and future conflict prevention; funds that, as will be seen, arguably were not well spent. The issue is twofold; the conduct of ineffective or inappropriate programmes and projects that brings into disrepute the 0.7 per cent aid budget and does damage to the UK's wider aid efforts. Second, the cost benefit to taxpayers is sometimes forgotten given the size of the aid budget; but the comparisons of relatively small governance programmes in terms to the cost of a hospital ward or primary school inevitably has brought criticisms in a time of austerity in the UK. Another view might be that the UK government had taken a leading role in both these countries arguably in order to retain its prominence as a global power of influence. If this is the case, then the UK government had responsibilities to ensure that the conditions were created for officials to conduct and execute policy effectively.

3.4.2.1 Countries at risk of large-scale conflict

Study selection was limited to those states that were included in the UK government's programmes in 2010/11 and were at risk of large-scale conflict and would benefit from structural conflict prevention as set out in Chapter 1. Of the states identified in the BAR (and the 2014 Stabilisation Unit Business Plan), the focus of this thesis necessarily reduces the candidate list to the following: Burma/Myanmar, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Occupied

Palestinian Territories (OPT), Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda.

3.4.2.2 The length of involvement

Of the states identified above primary preference for policy implementation studies was given to states in which, leading up to the Coalition strategy and continuing during the Coalition government, the UK had played a major role in stabilisation and development activities. In some countries, the UK government had long involvement but for the purposes of this study, relatively limited involvement and programmes: countries therefore excluded were Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, OPT, South Africa and Tajikistan. Hence the selection process focused on: Burma/Myanmar, Bangladesh, DRC, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda. Burma/Myanmar was also excluded as it represented new engagements for the UK undertaken by the Coalition government on an opportunity basis due to internal Burma/Myanmar political progress. However, this did not present a sufficiently long engagement to track trends, although it is recognised that there was an opportunity to examine how political intent drove the government agenda.

3.4.2.3 The linkage with UK security

During the tenure of the Coalition government (and since) the UK's security has become a major factor in the selection of where the UK deploys its aid and conflict prevention efforts. The BSOS states that the spill over effects of "refugee flows, terrorist activity, and organised crime groups, all of which can have an impact on our own security" (HMG, 2011, p 8) impact the UK's security in terms of terrorism, illegal drugs, and long term, our prosperity. The BSOS also notes the financial cost of managing threats and conflicts in trade, commodity prices, and the cost of UK's security. A policy implementation study that reflected the importance of the UK's security would contrast well with a policy implementation study that was focused on the common good rather than the UK's security. Hence, this would suggest Bangladesh (Islamist terrorism), DRC (migration), Kenya (pipeline route to Somalia and Islamist terrorism), Pakistan (links to ongoing operations and efforts in Afghanistan and Islamist terrorism), Uganda (pipeline route to Somalia and Islamist terrorism), and MENA (Islamist terrorism, refugees, economic migrants).

3.4.2.4 The size and scope of HMG's involvement

Chapter 4 considers the departmental programmes in detail. Analysis or funding and projects and programmes listed in DFID's DevTracker assisted in identifying candidate countries. By 2013 in the top ten for funding were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, DRC and Kenya, with South Sudan at eleventh and Burma/Myanmar at sixteenth. Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Uganda were all outside the top 20; this was also reflected in a Nvivo analysis of DFID's Government and Civil Society programmes. As a regional approach the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) deserves attention as it again features strongly in the BSOS with reference to the DFID-FCO £110 million Arab Partnership[18] Fund that was to assist

[18] The Arab Partnership Initiative is the joint FCO/DFID approach to the Arab Spring. Launched as a £5 million FCO fund in February 2011, it was expanded in May to £110 million over four years in recognition of the historic opportunity presented to support the building of a more stable, open and prosperous Middle East and North Africa region. The Arab Partnership includes an FCO-led Participation Fund (up to £40 million) and a DFID-led Economic Facility (up to £70 million). HMG. 2011. *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* [Online]. On line. Available:

departments "working with reforming governments, civil society, parliaments, the media and judiciary to build stable, responsive institutions, promote inclusive economic growth, and strengthen citizen participation" (HMG, 2011, Section 9.15).

3.4.2.5 Theoretical balance

Of the possible countries that were considered, both Burma/Myanmar and South Sudan offered the opportunity to examine a new or emerging situation that might have been appropriate for a problem, politics and policy theoretical approach. South Sudan offered a better case as the involvement in Burma/Myanmar was only just beginning to emerge during the Coalition government; the UK had been involved in Sudan/South Sudan longer. The other countries all offered the opportunity to examine how incremental policy development theory might impact the government's approach. Linking to the other factors above, Nepal was a strong candidate for selection.

3.4.2.6 The selected countries for study

Taking account of the variables above, the final selection of country policy implementation studies was South Sudan and Nepal as the two primary studies. These two policy implementation studies provide a mix of Africa and Asia, a balance between new emerging states and a long-standing engagement political and aid relationship, and programmes in which DFID Governance and Security programmes featured strongly as well as the theoretical balance of approach. Other options were discounted for the following reasons:

- Rwanda. Sierra Leone and Uganda were rejected as the conflict prevention activities were relatively small and South Sudan offered a better African opportunity for study.

- DRC and Kenya were rejected as again South Sudan represented a better African opportunity for study as it was a new state where the international community had an opportunity to make a significant difference early in the life of a new state.

- Pakistan and Bangladesh were rejected as there was a danger of focusing too much on the UK's security agenda;

- MENA was also rejected as it was more appropriate to the rapid response pillar of BSOS despite it being heavily referenced in the BSOS.

South Sudan provides a unique opportunity to examine how the UK supported an emerging nation which only achieved formal independence in 2011, albeit the situation changed with the outbreak of civil war in 2013. Understanding how South Sudan became a failed state so quickly requires review prior to an analysis of the UK's role in peacebuilding and statebuilding – given that South Sudan was selected as a New Deal pilot partner state of the UK in 2011. As for the UK, it had been engaged directly in the emergence of South Sudan as one of the three key Troika[19] countries that assisted in the peace process between

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf [Accessed 7 Feb 2020].

[19] US, Norway and UK had a special position within the CPA process (see Chapter 7).

North and South. Furthermore, right from the start of the Coalition government, Sudan was drawing Cabinet-level attention not only for what was happening under the CPA but also for the conflict in Darfur. In this case there is an opportunity to examine the full spectrum of identified themes.

Nepal offers the opportunity to conduct a complementary study in a different region. The UK has had a long-standing relationship with Nepal which, since 2008, has been emerging from civil war. Since the end of that civil war, Nepal was struggling to develop as a parliamentary democracy; it was ranked "partly free" by Freedom House and 145th on the UN Human Development Index (HDI) 2015 scale. The UK government had been involved in stabilisation operations in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, and it is worth examining how this developed and then what impact the Coalition government's policy had as Nepal was again specifically mentioned in the BSOS upstream section. Once again, there is an opportunity to examine the full spectrum of identified themes.

3.5 Limitations of the methodology

Having set out the research method it is important to record the limitations with the selected method. These relate to: limitations of the research design; problems associated with studying the implementation of policy; issues with research sites; and positionality with respect to my past career and experience.

3.5.1 Limitations of the research design

The main limitation of the research design was that it was totally reliant on documentation in the public domain and the good will of individuals to be interviewed. The problem was compounded in that the research sites (Whitehall, South Sudan and Nepal) have changed significantly in the ten years since the focus period (2010–2015) of this research. Gaining access to individuals overcame some of the limitations of only seeing source documents in the public domain, but one must acknowledge that a richer picture could be presented if one had access to government held documents as well. Likewise, for interviews. As mentioned earlier I was successful in achieving interviews with stakeholders representing a cross section of the organisations involved in policy development and policy implementation. However, two groups were more difficult to access and not well represented in the research: serving senior UK government civil servants and senior representatives of the governments of South Sudan and Nepal. It is therefore acknowledged that the full colours and richness of the tapestry were not fully represented in the thesis. Nonetheless, it is strongly argued that the tapestry presented provides a very clear picture of what was happening and why.

3.5.2 Problems associated with studying the implementation of policy

In considering the actions taken by government and departments, one must take account of the time lag between the issuing of government direction in 2011, and the development of actions in departments. Any major shift in direction, be it driven bottom up or top down, can take time as departments develop ideas, turn these into strategies and plans, and coordinate (where required) across government. These strategies, programmes and projects then need to be submitted to ministers for approval in principle and then result in business cases for authority to spend funds. Two further factors that impact on the speed at which departments can act are the departmental financial profile and any need for adjustment and the letting of contracts (or adjustment of tasks where appropriate enabling contracts exist). This thesis does not look in detail at the process as outlined. This thesis focuses on

the intent of the government and departments, and how that intent was beginning to be translated on the ground. This thesis also documents the impact of efforts that had not been well positioned politically with partner countries. Also, it should be noted that the implications of this lengthy process of policy development, strategy development, business case approval and contract letting, are that, unless there was very high-level political direction on upstream, or pre-existing appropriate plans, then programmes and plans might not have emerged until 2012 at the earliest, which would probably be reflected in the 2013/14 financial profile and beyond.

3.5.3 Positionality

This research drew on my personal experience serving as a military officer in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Afghanistan. As a military officer, with visibility of both the military and political strategic level, I had seen first-hand the significant impact that well executed operations, programmes and projects could make on communities as part of a wider approach to stabilisation, peace and statebuilding and conflict prevention. However, I also had experienced institutional statebuilding programmes that were both inappropriately conceived and failures. My own experience was as a "street-level bureaucrat". But that experience demonstrated to me the complexities of setting a strategy with a local partner for institutional development. Hence, I was interested in how the Coalition government followed through from initial statements of intent to departmental policy. I wanted to get some feel for how policy was being executed in target countries with local and international partners – noting that structural conflict prevention is a long-term activity. Given my background, I was conscious of my own positionality regarding both the overall research question and interaction with interviewees. Having had a career in the military and having been involved in conflict, post-conflict and conflict prevention operations, there was a risk of a conflict of interest between my own impartiality and objectiveness and the way the research was approached. Certainly, at the start of the research, and shaped by operational experience, my ideas were somewhat aligned to the upstream pillar and its focus on institutions. However, my theoretical knowledge and experience, developed in the Masters degree, enabled me to take a broader view and question the approach that was taken by government.

3.6 Ethical approach

Noting advice on the conduct of academic research (ESRC, 2020, Walliman, 2011), the key ethical issue that was faced in the conduct of this research was the interaction with representatives of government, civil service and other organisations, and the handling of data gained at those interactions. Access to individuals of government departments and other international organisations was through official channels, and it was understood therefore that interviews with individuals were offering a personal view and official position representing their department or organisation. However, as semi-structured interviews were conducted this allowed an individual to tell their story of their involvement or share their knowledge of, for example, the development or execution of policy. In conducting semi-structured interviews there was also a possibility that more personal views might be expressed which may be critical of or not in line with the thinking of the organisation. This has two implications for the research. First, it was important that the interviewee is clear that any personal remarks made will be done so under the Chatham House Rule. Second, that interview data based on personal views not representative of the parent organisation is held and used on an anonymous basis with no mention of the individual's name or

organisation and measures have been taken aimed to prevent identification. Most interviews were conducted over Skype and permissions was obtained from all interviewees to record their interviews. At the beginning of all the interviews there was also recorded verbal confirmation that the interviewee could be quoted (on or off the record); the majority of face-to-face interviews also resulted in a consent form. Some interviewees requested that the text of any quotes would be confirmed with them and some were adjusted by the interviewee for clarity); this was agreed, and the action carried out via emails (which have been retained).

Chapter 4 – The Coalition government's conflict prevention policy

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 established that upstream conflict prevention by the international community was an aspirational policy that had failed broadly to materialise successfully. Chapter 1 demonstrated the past initiatives by the international community and Chapter 2 revealed how structural conflict prevention as a policy was struggling to get past the conceptual. This chapter charts the emergence of structural conflict prevention policy in the period 2010–2015 under the Coalition government's intent to move upstream. As the story unfolds, so too will the links with policy theory (links that will be addressed more explicitly in Chapter 5). Given the intent to chart the emergence of policy, this chapter draws heavily on government policies and plans to chronicle the development of Coalition policy and business plans. In doing so, this chapter will place the UK government's efforts in the context of the wider international communities' efforts at the time as outlined in Chapter 1. Mirroring the issues already identified in Chapter 2, the chapter notes the normative nature of policy which struggled to move out of the conceptual space. There are early indications of the lack of a clear approach to the development of policy that can clearly be linked to the policy theories.

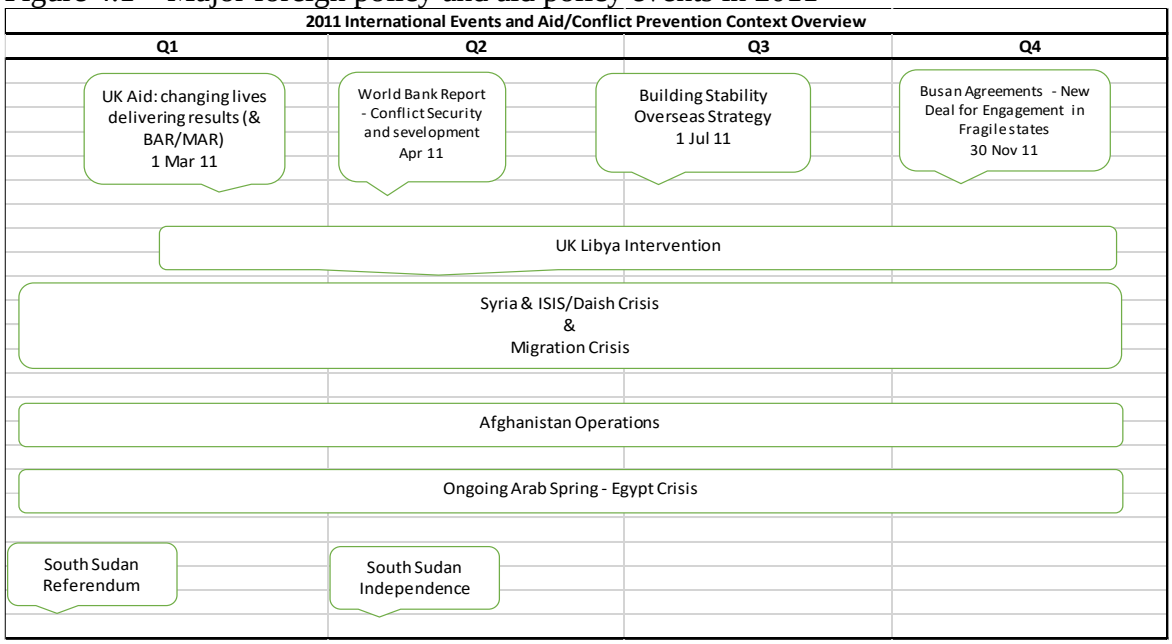
The key points that emerge from this chapter is that the BSOS was not strategy but political intent: it did set a new tone for the debate about the UK's role in conflict prevention. The BSOS seems to lose currency around 2013, but still remains an extant government document possibly because it would be difficult to get the three departments to agree to changes. Although "Investing in upstream prevention" was one of the three pillars of the UK government's strategy, little real attention was paid to it, and the focus in Parliament was on those international crises that impacted UK security. Ministers set the tone, priority and direction for departments but where the UK government might have increased efforts for upstream, in areas in which UK was already engaged, this did not happen. The government's approach was generally warmly welcomed and was a sign of the war weariness with concerns of the cost of military intervention. However, there remained real concerns in Parliamentary committees on the level of the UK government's strategic analysis although committees tended to look at specific departments and not cross-cutting issues. The resultant policy for conflict prevention was normative and weak. The policy did not set the conditions for operations, hence the need to examine business plans and country actions. The departmental and inter-departmental policy that did emerge was neither suitable to be operationalised nor did business plans give much indication of ends, ways and means, particularly for the MOD and FCO. There was no real coherence across Whitehall or within departments for structural conflict prevention in the remaining four years of the Coalition government. Reflecting on his premiership, David Cameron was to acknowledge the gaps in the understanding of how to address fragile states and turn UK policy into effective practice.

4.2 Political intent and policy direction

The year 2011 was key for the setting of the policy, direction and priorities of the Coalition government for conflict prevention. But when seen in the context of international events of interest to UK foreign policy, as set out in Figure 4.1, it is unsurprising that the impact was to be more muted. For this thesis, the key events of interest were the publication

of the *Bilateral Aid Review* (BAR) in March and the *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS) in July. Other key events were the Busan Conference in December that endorsed the New Deal at which the UK government agreed to partner with South Sudan as part of a pilot programme. Hence, while there were opportunities for structural (upstream) conflict prevention, principally in South Sudan, this was overshadowed by other conflict and security events that directly impacted the UK. In relation to conflict prevention, an analysis of Hansard makes clear the focus of Hague and Mitchell over the year; operational conflict prevention dominated the agenda. The focus was on Afghanistan, Libya and the Arab Spring, together with emerging Mediterranean migration.

Figure 4.1 – Major foreign policy and aid policy events in 2011



Hague, Fox and Mitchell were certainly talking up the need to pre-empt conflict. This was not a UK philanthropic response to the needs of fragile states; rather it reflected an ongoing debate regarding UK security, the utility of intervention and the cost-effectiveness of such actions. The Coalition government was building on a conflict prevention policy that had already been developing under the previous Labour government.

From a conflict prevention policy perspective, despite focus elsewhere, there was a window of opportunity[20] for structural conflict prevention policy development. There was political direction: now it was a question how this would unfold, and whether it would deliver effective policy through one of the processes identified in Chapter 3[21]. One of the striking changes between the Labour government policy and that of Coalition government is the authority under which the respective policies were launched. Under the authority of Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for International Development, Labour launched *Preventing Violent Conflict* that was specifically designed to address conflict prevention (DFID, 2007). Although *Preventing Violent Conflict* was a DFID policy document, it had been underpinned by a previous wide-ranging, 2009 White Paper *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future*, issued to Parliament with a forward by Gordon

[20] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 6.
[21] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP Nos 3, 4, 5, 6; Incremental No 1.

Brown in 2009 (DFID, 2009). The emergence of the BSOS in 2011 under the Coalition government as a whole-of-government approach and issued under the signatures of Hague, Fox and Mitchell, the respective Secretaries of State for the FCO, MOD and DFID, was the basis of a problem identified[22], but were the policies available within government or departments to answer the call?

How the BSOS document emerged has not become totally clear, but it appears to have its origins in an inter-departmental working group[23] that made its way through to sign-off by the three secretaries of state; it is examined in more detail below. The themes of the strategy can be seen in the speeches of senior Conservative politicians. Prior to government, Willian Hague was focusing on international threats, instability and the need for a more coherent approach through the new National Security Council[24]. In 2009, Hague had stated that "we must focus on good governance and fostering the democratic institutions … and the resolving of differences without resort to the gun" (Hague, 2009); governance and institutions feature heavily in BSOS upstream pillar[25]. At the Conservative Party Conference in 2010 Hague set out the intent that himself, Mitchell (DFID) and Fox (MOD) would work more closely together than had been seen by previous incumbents.

The first year of the Coalition government was a policy shaping year with two significant events of interest to this research. First, there was the publication of the National Security Strategy (HMG, 2010) which was to have a significant effect on aid and conflict prevention policies in 2011. Second was the initiation by Andrew Mitchell of a major review of multilateral and bilateral aid. The FCO also led an initiative to develop an inter-departmental plan focused on women, peace and security – just before the tenth anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security that had mandated a national plan; this was more focused on areas in conflict rather than conflict prevention. The peace process in Sudan (North and South) was also on the government's agenda.

The earliest Parliamentary indication of future government direction comes in the Foreign Affairs and Defence Debate on 26 May 2010 within weeks of the government taking office (8 May). In a debate dominated by security and Afghanistan, William Hague set out his intent for foreign policy to "pursue a distinctive British foreign policy that … upholds our belief in human rights, political freedom, free trade and poverty reduction, and that promotes our national interest" (Hansard, 2010b, Column 175). Commenting on the need for the UK to be a "force for good", Hague noted that:

> This approach will require a greater degree of co-ordination of our foreign, defence, development and security policy than ever before, so that our efforts are part of a coherent strategy that can command the widest possible support in this House and across the country (Hansard, 2010b, Column 175).

But from a foreign policy perspective the priorities were Afghanistan and Pakistan followed by the prevention of nuclear proliferation. Notwithstanding these priorities, Hague did

[22] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 6; Incremental No 3; Rational No 3.
[23] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 3.
[24] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 2, 3, 4.
[25] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 1.

reiterate the commitment to the 0.7 per cent of GNI to aid which would subsequently be enshrined in law by the end of the Parliament in 2015.

Recalling Andrew Mitchell's comment that the UK's "upstream offer on conflict prevention must be as good as the one we have honed for 'downstream'" (Mitchell, 2010)[26], July 2010 also saw the first major debate on international development. This was the first opportunity for Andrew Mitchell to make a major statement on the direction of his Department. This debate was a week after the first budget of the Coalition government in which a clear commitment had been made to international development by ring-fencing aid at a time of significant austerity measures across government services[27]. Mitchell's speech covers much ground from the link between conflict and poverty to the impact of climate change and onto progress on the MDGs. Mitchell also announced a Bilateral Aid Review (BAR).

In neither of these debates is there much clarity of what was to emerge as policy in 2011 in relation to stability and conflict prevention in fragile states. Conflict prevention was not entirely absent from government statements; reporting to Parliament in July 2010[28], David Lidington noted the EU and UK focus on the peaceful implementation of the South Sudan CPA, and discussions on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hansard, 2010a). The government was able to push forward their interest in conflict prevention in South Sudan as the Foreign Secretary chaired a UN special session on Sudan in November 2010. Hague commented in Parliament that it was vital for the international community to remain "united and steadfast in its support of the CPA" and that Sudan was a "top priority for the UK's presidency of the Security Council" (Hansard, 2010c)[29]. Hague went on to say that stability in Sudan would build security and prosperity in the region and would:

> … mean that Sudan does not again become a base for terrorism, or a source of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries.… it will help the Sudanese people receive the tangible benefits of peace that have eluded them for so long. We must continue to strive to this end (Hansard, 2010c).

Mitchell, following a visit to Sudan, echoes Hague and in a written report to Parliament, again in November, he wrote that he made clear to the governments in the north and south that the UK was committed to the longer-term future of both north and south whatever the result of the referendum. Mitchell commented that:

> [T]he UK has a substantial development programme in south Sudan … [we have] provided basic services for over 1.8 million people so far, [and] remain committed to supporting the long-term future of southern Sudan (Hansard, 2010d).

A specific conflict prevention policy came in November 2010. In a written statement to Parliament Hague announced "that, today, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, together with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development,

[26] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 3 but missing proposals.
[27] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 1; no fixed objectives.
[28] David Lidington, the Minister for Europe, reporting on EU General Affairs and Foreign Affairs Council meetings, the Minister for Europe (FCO).
[29] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP Nos 4, 5, 6.

will publicly launch the UK's national action plan on women, peace and security" (Hansard, 2010e). This policy (FCO et al., 2010) was a response to UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security which had been passed in 2000 and was the culmination of work commenced under the previous Labour government. Hague set out the key commitments which were to make:

> "Women, Peace and Security" an integral part of our conflict policy, by providing specialised training to civilian and military staff; placing women at the front and centre of our development policy; and the deployment of female military personnel as "Female Engagement Officers" in support of UK battle groups to improve military engagement with female Afghan civilians; to implement specific action plans for priority countries, starting with Afghanistan, Nepal and DRC (Hansard, 2010e, 50WS)[30].

Hague added that the aim was "to strengthen the action taken by the international community, including by taking a strong advocacy role at the United Nations and supporting the enhancement of UN structures that assist women in conflict" (Hansard, 2010e). While the purpose of the policy was intended to strengthen the UK's ability to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution the detail was still narrowly focused on countries in conflict and not *at risk* of conflict. The policy states that "the creation of a new UK cross-Government plan provides an opportunity to outline how UNSCR 1325 can be integrated into wider defence, diplomacy and development measures adopted in armed conflict and post-conflict situations" (FCO et al., 2010, p 3). Linking to Table 3.2, and the indicators of policy theory, this may have been a sound first step in an incremental policy approach, but there was no indication that there was an intent to broaden the scope to other states at risk of violent conflict. It was very much focused on operational conflict prevention. The need for a government response to UNSCR 1325 provided also provided a focusing event and a window of opportunity to develop conflict prevention policy, but the resultant focus of the response was not as wide-ranging as it might have been.

4.3 Government policy and the BSOS

From a policy perspective, conflict prevention and the needs of fragile states were firmly on the political agenda in the second half of 2011. This section reviews the BSOS, the BAR and other DFID policy documents as these are the key start points to the Coalition government policy process and hence this research. BSOS was the capping strategy for the government, but from a upstream structural conflict prevention perspective it was light on detail[31]. The outcome of the DFID review, the BAR, had already been published months earlier, and while there was an update to the BAR in 2012 little changed resulting from the publication of the BSOS.

The BSOS had been issued in July 2011. Structural conflict prevention policy, despite being headlined in BSOS with its own upstream section, did not feature prominently in subsequent government, inter-departmental or departmental policy. Government priorities were clearly to manage the extraction from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the emerging Arab Spring. It can of course be argued that the UK's activities in Pakistan were structural conflict

[30] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 2, 3.
[31] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 6.

prevention in as much as the intent was to reduce the impact of potential threats emerging from Pakistan and the impact on wider UK security interests – for example, in Afghanistan and the UK.

The purpose of the BSOS was "to address instability and conflict overseas because it is both morally right and in Britain's national interest" (HMG, 2011, p4). This articulation of purpose right at the outset provides a clear statement of political intent; the Coalition government aid strategy for building stability is inextricably linked to UK interests and security. This was claimed as the first integrated cross-government strategy to address conflict issues. The document is set out in two parts: first, addressing why stability matters to the UK, and second the UK's response to the issues raised. However, the BSOS does not even reference the previously published BAR/MAR nor their capping document[32] *UK aid: Changing lives, delivering results* (DFID, 2011c), despite the BAR in particular having targeted fragile states. The UK government was reacting to a problem identified based on its own experience of interventions and a desire to do better. There was also the added pressure of the tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 that had gone unaddressed up to that time. Based on the evidence of past interventions, there was a clear intent to look for an alternative approach.

As a strategy the BSOS addresses the triggers and drivers of instability, and it identified the importance of legitimate and effective institutions matched by a working economy that meets the expectations of the population[33]. These are all issues that had been learned from experience and covered in the literature in Chapter 2, albeit the discourse was not straightforward as to how these issues might be addressed. The UK government's strategic response to the challenges was in three pillars (HMG, 2011, p4-5): "Early warning" to improve the ability to anticipate instability and potential triggers for conflict; "Rapid crisis prevention and response" to improve the ability to take fast, appropriate and effective action to prevent a crisis or stop it spreading or escalating; and of specific interest "Investing in upstream prevention" which aimed to help build strong, legitimate institutions and robust societies that were capable of managing tensions and shocks (HMG, 2011, p18)[34].

Drawing on the academic discourse of the time, the BSOS majors on the importance of working with weak and emerging democracies rather than imposing models of democracy. Noting the importance of elections, the BSOS recognises the risks and lessons of earlier interventions where there had been a rush by the international community and the UN to conduct elections[35]. The approach adopted in the BSOS was to focus on those states where "the risks are high, our interests are most at stake and where we know we can have an impact" (HMG, 2011, p18). The priorities are not spelt out, but it is clear from the text in terms of references to high risk, UK interests and UK impact that Afghanistan, MENA (Libya, Syria and the Arab Spring), migration and the Ukraine were high on the list. This left Nepal and South Sudan, two states in which the UK had been significantly engaged with for some time, lower on the priority scale.

However, conflict prevention spans the pillars of "Rapid crisis prevention and response" and "Investing in upstream prevention"; also "Early warning" has been identified

[32] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 2 but no policies.
[33] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 2.
[34] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 6.
[35] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 3.

as a key issue to effective structural conflict prevention interventions. The UK did not adopt the Carnegie/OECD terminology for conflict prevention (operational prevention and structural prevention), nor is there much reference to international agreements and agreed international goals for conflict prevention. Specifically, there is no mention of the IDPS/New Deal goals (PSGs) although the BSOS does reference the IDPS. The BSOS states that the UK would "continue to work with conflict-affected and fragile countries themselves, ... through the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, to bolster their efforts to demand more effective support from bilateral and multilateral donors" (HMG, 2011, pp 30-35). One can see how the BSOS emphasises the importance of politics and "getting behind a political settlement that lays then foundations for tackling the causes of conflict" (HMG, 2011, p 16), and funding to fragile states was to be increased to 30 per cent of the aid budget by 2014/15[36]. There is still a hefty emphasis on an institutional approach, with emphasis on governance, security and justice. This tends towards the safe ground of a programming and projects-based approach that underpins the technical expertise of departments and officials supported by NGOs[37].

Notwithstanding the focus on fragile states, the BSOS is essentially inward-looking document focusing on the UK government's approach and inter-departmental coordination without setting any objectives, resources or priorities for the problems it outlines and the solutions suggested. That is not to suggest that addressing an inward-focused strategy is wrong; however, the BSOS begins with one issue (the problems of fragile states) but then seeks to tackle a different issue (what the UK must change in order to improve operations) without really addressing either. From the UK government perspective, the focus was on internal structures and processes, with some indication of ways and means but with no priorities, objectives or any allocation of resources. This strategy did not point the way forward for investing in conflict prevention. Also, it is worth noting the way in which the document is set out. Logically, one might address pillars from the perspective of early warning of potential conflict, then seeking to address the upstream issues, and were that to not succeed, or a problem suddenly emerge, then rapid crisis prevention and response. With the upstream pillar at the end of the document one gains the impression that it was almost added for completeness from a doctrinal perspective. While the BSOS was a clear statement of political intent to change the way in which the UK approached the problems in fragile states, it did so without a clear way forward beyond then looking to departments to do better. It appeared the next phase of policy development was down to departments, albeit based on a whole-of-government approach with the NSC providing the oversight and coordination.

In addition to the BSOS, the DFID 2011 Aid Review must also be assessed despite being completed before the publication of the BSOS. There was a revision of the aid review in 2012 after the publication of the BSOS, but there were no significant changes resulting from the BSOS publication. The 2010/11 BAR and MAR were major DFID reviews of performance and policy; this resulted in some major changes in direction. The BAR identified programme with an indicative budget of £14.695 billion over the life of the Parliament (DFID, 2011b, Annex F), 30 per cent of which by 2014 was to be directed towards "unstable states … [and] address the causes of conflict" (DFID, 2011c, p21).

[36] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1, 3.
[37] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 2, 6.

The Coalition government's *UK aid: Changing lives, delivering results (DFID, 2011c)* was the capping document that presented the BAR/MAR to Parliament with a refocusing of efforts to a new list of 27 country programmes. Analysis of the text of *UK aid: Changing lives, delivering results* provides an overview of the direction of the DFID programme, but the detail is broadly high level. The stated aim of the DFID aid programme was to support "peace and security, tackle conflict and help transform the lives of millions of poor people across the world" (DFID, 2011b, p15, Para 50) with a strong focus on the health and education of women and children. The inference being that peace and security is an enabler to the transformation of the lives of, in particular, women and children. Taking this high-level policy in conjunction with the *Bilateral Aid Review results: Country Summaries* and *Bilateral Aid Review Technical Report,* which describes the methodology of the review as well as outcomes, a little more detail is revealed – but it is still broad-brush policy.

The *Bilateral Aid Review results: Country summaries* (DFID, 2011a) provides an overview, country by country of the issues, top priorities and key results sought by the programme. Each country is dealt with in a half to single page with a summary of its problems, top priorities and key results sought. An overview of the policy is at Table 4.1 (below). In this review of the country plans and activities the aim has been to capture language that is clearly associated with a conflict prevention rather than a wider development agenda. The *Bilateral Aid Review Technical Report* provides a little more insight into the process of how the DFID programme evolved under the Coalition government. During the review the DFID staff were tasked with "developing a 'results offer' … that could be realistically achieved … over the four years from April 2011–March 2015" (DFID, 2011b, p8, Para 24). Staff were directed to deliver proposals under five pillars[38] that represented Coalition government priorities. Although the Review was targeted at the totality of DFID aid spending, there was much emphasis in the report on fragile states. DFID staff developed detailed costed plans for priority countries which were presented to ministers who indicated which results were to be taken up. Results were aggregated against the specified themes in order to ensure that Coalition government commitments were also being met.

In the context of conflict prevention, one of the specified checks was that the offer met the "commitment in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) to spend at least 30% of aid in fragile and conflict-affected states by 2014/15" (DFID, 2011b, p12, Para 41). One of the Report's key conclusions was that DFID had refocused its efforts "on fragile or conflict affected states, ensuring that upstream conflict prevention and efforts to tackle poverty are built into our programmes in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way" (DFID, 2011b, p14, Para 49b). However, as the review in Table 4.1 below indicates, this is not easy to identify and raises questions about rhetoric and substance. How these statements translate into actions will be investigated further below and in the policy implementation studies.

[38] Wealth creation, direct delivery of MDGs, governance and security, climate change and humanitarian assistance.

Table 4.1 – Overview of the DFID Key Results and conflict prevention activities set out in country plans[39]

Serial	Country	Results	Conflict Prevention (CP) SMART Objective and Remarks (focus on results that describe conflict prevention activities rather than those that are primarily related to development)
1	Afghanistan	2	CP – "**help the government of Afghanistan allocate and spend funds well** so it can deliver services to its people" (p16)
2	Bangladesh	2	CP – **nil**; focus is on schools and impact of floods (p17).
3	Burma	3	CP – **limited**; focus on health and education. There are CP related priorities – **help local groups have a say in their future** (p17).
4	DRC	4	CP – "**build peace and progress in 1,500 rural communities**" (p3). There are other CP related priorities – **right to vote; illegal exploitation of minerals and sexual violence** but no key results associated with these activities.
5	Ethiopia	2	CP – **nil**; focus on health and education (p4).
6	Kenya	3	CP –**limited**; focus on health and improvement to financial services. There are CP related priorities – **jobs for the young and promoting stability and strengthening accountability** but no key results associated with the activities (p5).
7	Kyrgyzstan (and Tajikistan)	3	CP – focus on **assisting people get access to services and job creation**; this can be interpreted as CP (p18).
8	Liberia	2	CP- **nil**; focus on health (p6).
9	Malawi	2	CP **– limited**; focus on health. There are CP related priorities – **focus on the private sector as an engine for growth, improving the effectiveness of national audits, and improving public service delivery** but no key results associated with these activities (p6).
10	Mozambique	4	CP – **nil**; focus on health.
11	Nepal	2	CP – **limited**; focus on health and jobs. There are CP related priorities – "**support the peace process, strengthening governance and improving security and access to justice**" but no associated key results (p20).
12	Nigeria	2	CP – **limited**; focus on education and income generation. There are CP related priorities – helping Nigeria **use its oil revenues to improve the lives** of its citizens but no key results related to the activity (p8).
13	Occupied Palestinian Territories	3	CP – **limited**; focus on poverty and education. There are CP related priorities – "**improve accountability, security and justice** for the Palestinian people" but no associated key results (p23).
14	Pakistan	4	CP – **limited**; focus on health and education. There are CP related priorities – "**building peace and security across the region** and **making democracy stick** by improving governance and strengthening democratic principles" but no associated key results (p21).
15	Rwanda	2	CP – "ensure 6.4m people have the legal **right to their land**" (p8).
16	Sierra Leone	2	CP – "enable 3.1m people to **vote without fear**". There are CP related priorities – **access to justice for women/children**; **transparency of government**; delivery of basic services (p9).
17	Somalia	2	CP – **nil**; focus on humanitarian assistance and jobs (p10).
18	Sudan	3	CP – **nil**; focus on water, sanitation, food health, education and long term development (p12).
19	Tanzania	2	CP – **nil**; focus on education and health (p13).
20	Uganda	2	CP – **limited**; focus on health. There are CP related priorities – **improve government accountability** but no key results associated with this activity (p13).
21	Yemen	0	CP – **nil**.

It is worth noting that South Sudan, which gained independence in July 2011, was not yet being considered as a separate state and there was still only one embassy and country team. Sudan was placed in the Quartile 1 countries which corresponds to the 25 percent of countries with the highest need-effectiveness score[40]; there is no breakdown of proposed spend against the thematic pillars. However, taking the detail from the country plans concerns are already emerging as to the extent of the conflict prevention activities in the lead-up to the independence of the south. As for Nepal there were no key results associated with conflict prevention, but priority was being given to security and justice; a programme that was already underway and in difficulty as will be seen. Noting the objectives in Table 4.1 at this stage, and just taking the DFID programme which pre-dated the BSOS by a few months, this does not give any real understanding of a coherent approach[41].

[39] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 6.

[40] Based on a Carlelton University, Canada index that take account of fragility and failed states, although the indicative budget for Sudan is broadly straight-lined at £140m across the period.

[41] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 3 less policies available.

During this policy shaping period, Mitchell was engaged with the international community on aid effectiveness culminating with the Busan New Deal in December 2011. Fragile states were a UK priority at Busan and featured in the outcomes with the UK signing up to partnering with Afghanistan and South Sudan. All the early indicators for a new political effort were strong and, given that central to the New Deal was that the ownership of development priorities must be by developing countries, politics would be central to progress. However, in the Foreword to the BSOS, the opening premise is that stability "can only be achieved" (HMG, 2011, p 2) when there are strong and legitimate institutions that are needed to manage potential conflict, so stressing the technical nature of stability.

Chapter 5 will comment on the development of policy in relation to theory in more detail but, at this stage, and linking to the policy indicators in Table 3.2, it should be noted that the BSOS did not emerge out of a rational approach to a problem; nor it will be argued in due course, would such an approach be appropriate for departmental policy development. Linking to the indicators of incremental policy, the way forward seemed to be emerging from past experience and there are early indications of an incremental policy development approach in some of the statements relating to institutions and justice and security. However, focusing on the indicators of how an issue, policy and politics come together to develop policy, at this stage there is no evidence of politics bringing together a broad coalition of policies and experts. The question of whether the publication of the BSOS and BAR, together with the setting up of the NSC with DFID a full member, were coalescing events and a window of opportunity that would enable structural conflict prevention to be taken forward, will be addressed in the coming sections and chapters.

4.4 Parliamentary scrutiny

This section covers the review of the Coalition government policy by Parliament committees over the five years of the Parliament using published government documents and Hansard. The section provides a view of how Parliament and committees were reacting to the policy initiatives and gives a view of the positive reaction to the Coalition government initiatives despite the lack of detail. The analysis of policy was first based on a search of Hansard for the terms conflict prevention and building stability. The references[42] that were relevant were copied into NVivo and the text analysed. In addition, searches were conducted on the speeches and written comments of key politicians as indicate in Table 4.2. Over the period of the Parliament, the Coalition government conflict agenda begins to emerge with a strong focus on women, children and sexual violence in conflict. However, the government's upstream structural conflict prevention agenda, with its focus on institutions, security and justice, does not take hold in policy terms. Government policy was not challenged in Parliament and the strategy was broadly welcomed with limited real scrutiny. As the Parliament progressed the Lords did seek more detail as did the ID Committee, but this was not forthcoming. Government policy for structural conflict prevention was left to departments to be taken forward, albeit without any strong ministerial direction. The broad policy issue may have been identified but there was no resultant detailed policy guidance to direct departmental or inter-departmental action.

[42] A reference ranges from a single statement to a complete written statement to Parliament.

Table 4.2 – Key political policy leaders

Serial	Name	Appointment	Dates	Remarks
1	Andrew Mitchell	SofS DfID	12 May 10 – 4 Sep 12	
2	Justine Greening	SofS DfID	4 Sept 12 – end of Parliament	
3	William Hague	Foreign Secretary	12 May 10 – 14 Jul 14	
4	Philip Hammond	Foreign Secretary	14 July14 – end of Parliament	
5	Phillip Hammond	SofS MOD	12 May 10 – 14 Jul 14	Operational focus is on Afghanistan. Adds little to the Parliamentary activity regarding CP.
6	Michael Fallon	SofS MOD	14 Jul 14 – end of Parliament (May 15)	Adds little to the Parliamentary activity regarding CP.

4.4.1 Parliamentary debate

BSOS was well received in Parliament, as was the commitment to 0.7 per cent (later enacted in law), albeit without any real understanding as to what was to be achieved. However, Parliamentary committees were more concerned at the lack of a strategic approach to execution. The publication of the Coalition government's policy documents on conflict prevention and building stability overseas resulted in two dedicated debates in 2011; one in the Lords and one in the Commons. The Commons debate in June, just before the publication of BSOS, (Hansard, 2011b) was opened by Simon Hughes (LD) referencing a House of Commons briefing note that quoted the 2011 World Bank report *Conflict, Security, and Development.* This report argued for a new direction with more focus: on building stable government; on justice; and on the police. The focus here is not on the debate itself but on the responses by the government's spokesperson at the debate, Henry Bellingham (Cons), a Permanent Under Secretary of State (PUS) at the FCO. Opening his response to the debate Bellingham stated that "the Government have made their work on conflict prevention a key priority…" (Hansard, 2011b, Vol 530, Col 21WH), with specific reference to Africa and Asia. He went further and focused upon upstream and the need to "protect innocent civilians from the effects of conflict, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children" in societies in which "their rights are respected and their voices heard" (Hansard, 2011b, Vol 530, Col 22WH). Linking aid and security, as had become a theme of government policy, Bellingham stated that in line with SDSR the government intended to increase the conflict pool's resources from £229 million to £309 million by 2014–15 and "we will refocus the Stabilisation Unit to do more work upstream"[43] (Hansard, 2011b, Vol 530, Col 23WH). It will be argued that this refocusing of the Stabilisation Unit upstream did not happen. Indeed by 2019 the Stabilisation Unit's own guidance specifically took the Stabilisation Unit out of long-term peacebuilding and statebuilding. It will be argued later that, linking to a key policy theory indicator, in effect the window of opportunity for upstream had come and gone.

The House of Lords debate in October 2011, after the publication of the BSOS, was a more in-depth debate than that of the Commons. Contributors were all broadly positive on the publication of the BSOS, although there was a lone critical voice – that of Lord Desai (Lab). Notwithstanding the general support for the strategy, Lord Desai called the document "intellectually inadequate and [I] do not think that it can be a basis on which to frame any sort of policy" (Hansard, 2011c, Vol 730, Col 1272). Lord Desai commented that the strategy was "too idealistic" looking for the "perfect solution" as everything "has to be democratic, transparent, accountable, gender-friendly, environmentally sustainable" and

[43] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 1; PPP Nos 3, 7.

continues "the notion of a fragile state is not an adequate notion. Most things that are called fragile states are not states at all. They are not even nations" (Hansard, 2011c, Vol 730, Col 1272).

Lord Desai was possibly focusing more on situations that had already descended into violence and the rapid response pillar. Desai was critical of the focus on democracy and accountability before basic security and the restoration of law and order. But this also has implications for the upstream approach too. The Coalition government response to the Lords' debate was provided by Lord Howell, Minister of State (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) (International Energy Policy). Picking up on issues raised during the debate, Lord Howell argued that upstream prevention was central to the strategy but, ultimately, the "UK's contribution to conflict prevention relies on counterfactual analysis – examining what level of conflict would have been likely without intervention, which is obviously a very difficult assessment to make" (Hansard, 2011c, Vol 730, Col 1273). This seems to be an early acknowledgement that upstream was not only challenging but also, in a time of evidence-based programming, it was challenging to find the evidence to justify effort. However, Lord Howell ignored Lord Desai's more substantive points on the normative nature of the strategy document. Once again, relating back to Table 3.2 and policy indicators, one sees evidence that the Coalition government had the intent, had identified the problem, but did not have a clear policy way forward. With austerity kicking in, policy evidence was not available for how to move upstream beyond broad statements relating to institutions, justice and security. There also seems to be a focus on a technical (programmes and projects) approach rather than the political actions that was firmly the space of ministers and senior officials.

The House of Lord debated the BSOS again in October 2012 with a motion to ask the Coalition government to review the implementation and impact of the BSOS. This debate was the most critical of the government strategy to date. Opening the debate Lord McConnell (Lab) comments that:

> We are yet to achieve, here in the UK or anywhere else, the important integration of that work, bringing together development, diplomacy and defence, into the DNA of the departments, governments and institutions at home and abroad (Hansard, 2012c, Col 588/9).

Despite the BSOS laying out a rough road map to tackle stabilisation, and in line with the World Bank report, McConnell comments that there was a need to create institutions to underpin justice and security and to put more effort into demobilisation and reintegration including job creation and regional solutions[44]. Lord Patten (Con) continues the criticism, noting that he supported the aims of the strategy, but "it must develop quite a way beyond just becoming an exemplar of joined-up, good cross-Whitehall work"; Lord Patten addressed the BSOS focus on partnerships stating that "it is a bit of an empty vessel in explaining just how partnerships with voluntary organisations can help to develop policy in a specific way"(Hansard, 2012c, Col 591). Lord Chidgey (LD) comments that the strategy was yet to be operationalised. Answering for the Coalition government, Lord Ahmad (Con), not a specialist in this area of government, seems to have broadly stuck to a script. He comments with standard answers reflecting the update given by Hague and Mitchell a few months

[44] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 2, 3, 4

earlier while adding some more examples of positive support in Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal and Sierra Leone and how the government was committed to keeping these countries on a stable path. In substance there was nothing new announced nor much substantive evidence of the way in which the strategy was being implemented. Again, the debate, and not just the government response, tends towards the technical not the political.

4.4.2 Parliamentary committees

By 2012 the ID Committee, supported by the ICAI, had already reviewed DFID's programme in Nepal (ID Cttee, 2010a) and in 2012 had produced two further reports of interest: *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda* (ID Cttee, 2012d), and *South Sudan: Prospects for Peace and Development* (ID Cttee, 2012a). The House of Lords had produced its report on South Sudan *The EU and Sudan* (House of Lords, 2011a) and the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group (Africa APPG) further commented on aspects of conflict prevention in their 2010 and 2012 reports *Africa and the Strategic Defence and Security Review* and *DFID's Aid Priorities in Africa* (Africa APPG, 2010, Africa APPG, 2012).

These reports indicate that, from a high-level government policy perspective, there was a theme of a lack of strategic thinking and planning. For example, neither the House of Lords report nor the ID Committee on Sudan paid much attention to the drivers of conflict in South Sudan despite local violence already becoming a major issue. Certainly, the fragility of the south was recognised but the threat of disintegration was not examined in any detail. There is also evidence that the wider strategic studies community was not focused on the issues either as, for example, giving evidence to the House of Lords Committee, one witness, John Middleton from Chatham House, told the committee that "South Sudan was not destined to be a failed state but it faces 'massive problems'" (House of Lords, 2011a, p 15). Arguably, in 2012 South Sudan was hardly acting as a state, given that it had only been in existence just over a year and had very little international support in its establishment as a state as will be addressed in the policy implementation study.

In the Defence Committee's 2013–14 report, *Intervention: Where When and How* (Def Cttee, 2014a), the issue of the Comprehensive Approach[45] was raised as was the emphasis on conflict prevention envisaged in BSOS and the *International Defence Engagement Strategy*. The Defence Committee sought clarification on how the BSOS and MOD Engagement Strategy would measure effectiveness as this had not been adequately addressed. In response the Coalition government completely failed to answer the issue of BSOS effectiveness, not even giving it a reference in the text. Instead the government concentrated on the effectiveness of the Defence Engagement Strategy (Def Cttee, 2014b, p9). The government's response did mention, in general terms that the MOD was adopting an "outcomes-based approach, using a metric ... to measure overall progress" against objectives including "capacity building" and "building influence" and the "change we will see in the next 5 to 10 years" (Def Cttee, 2014b, p9)[46]. While there is some hint of how capacity building would be addressed, there is little evidence as to how or where the MOD was focusing its efforts.

[45] MOD terminology for the combined approach of diplomacy, security and development to address instability.
[46] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 3, 4.

4.4.3 Ministerial statements

If 2011 provided the capping policy and outline of DFID plans, then 2012 was to see the publication of departmental and inter-departmental policy; parliamentary time relating to aid continued to be dominated by Afghanistan. Over the period of the Parliament, the dominant theme raised by ministers relating to conflict prevention was violence against women and the UNSCR 1325 Action Plan. Tracking government and Parliamentary focus in respect to fragile states and upstream, with specific attention on South Sudan and Nepal, one notes that interest in South Sudan rapidly fell away after 2011 independence and Nepal never really gained attention (other than after the earthquake in 2015).

A review of ministerial parliamentary activity[47] over the period 2010–2012 indicates that as well as Afghanistan, the main foci was on the Middle East, North Africa and Somalia. In 2012, and after the agreement at Busan to partner with South Sudan as a pilot under the New Deal, analysis indicates that Coalition government focus on Sudan/South Sudan had already passed. It is likely that the window of opportunity for real advances in conflict prevention policy, if there had been one for South Sudan, had already closed. As for Nepal, the analysis of statements indicates that it never really gained the attention of ministers in their reporting to Parliament. References to South Sudan had fallen off rapidly with references falling below that of Zimbabwe, Rwanda and India[48]. A strong rhetoric is presented from both Hague and Mitchell on actions to move upstream, but it will be argued in later chapters that this was more optimistic and perhaps well-meaning rhetoric that was never fully executed. There is evidence that what was being presented was doctrine based on lessons from past experience; a classic DFID and MOD approach to incremental policy development[49] (see Table 3.2) and public presentation but not necessarily linked to business execution.

In July 2012 Hague and Mitchell provided a written updated to the Commons on the implementation of the BSOS launched a year earlier. Hague commented that the Government had made good progress and that the introduction of the BSOS had, through a range of mechanisms, helped to integrate Government and that BSOS had "enabled the UK to remain at the heart of international thinking on conflict prevention" (Hansard, 2012a, Col 127-128WS). Hague listed the achievements as: a new system for early warning; senior officials across government meet regularly to systematically review the Coalition government's approach to selected priority countries; increased resources for conflict prevention; aligning the conflict pool's approach more towards upstream conflict prevention and with the government priorities mentioning Somalia, Pakistan and continuing support to the Balkans and the Caucasus. Arguably, Somalia was more conflict resolution than prevention. However, Hague stated that "our development programme continues to prevent conflict upstream, supporting countries to make that vital transition towards peaceful, stable and lasting future" (Hansard, 2012a, Col 127-128WS)[50].

By September 2012, Justine Greening had taken over as SofS for International Development; arguably insufficient time for Mitchell to embed his thinking and direction. There is no discernible change in direction but Greening places a personal and passionate emphasis on women's and girl's issues (violence, education, health, etc.) with a continuation

[47] Statements were captured in Nvivo and subsequently analysed for structural conflict prevention content.
[48] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP Nos 5, 6, 7 (opportunity closing).
[49] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 2, 3.
[50] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1, 3, 4, 6.

of extant policies. In November, Hague and Greening jointly release a written update to Parliament on plans for funding conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities for 2012–13 through to 2014–15 via the conflict pool fund. Taking account of obligatory peacekeeping, funding for 2012–13 was to rise to £644m and continue to rise over the spending period. The peacekeeping allocation was £374m each year with any additional funds being funded from the conflict pool if required; the allocation for 2012–13 was expected to be £435m. The balance (£209m for 2012–13) would provide an opportunity to align resources with BSOS aims with programme-level allocations being allocated on the "ability to deliver results on the ground against these objectives" (Hansard, 2012b, Col 20WS). Spread between the three pillars of the BSOS, £209m across multiple priority countries arguably is not a significant sum – albeit the focus was on the highest priorities, where risks are high, where UK interests were at stake and where it seems the UK could have impact. Hague again indicated an increase of conflict pool activity on upstream prevention and "supporting free, transparent and inclusive political settlements" through working with "Governments to develop effective and accountable security and justice systems; and building the capacity of communities, regional and international institutions to resolve conflicts" (Hansard, 2012b)[51]. However, there is neither detail nor areas of focus nor priorities identified. Drawing on policy theory and Table 3.2 indicators, there was no basis to develop structural conflict prevention policy from an incremental perspective as there was little direct experience to draw upon. Nor is there any evidence of how the new political vision was also bringing new ideas as to how ministers would or could take forward the initiative politically with other governments. It appears that departments were being left to develop priorities and take forward initiatives.

Throughout 2013, from a conflict prevention perspective, the main area of interest that ran was the focus on women, girls and sexual violence. The UK had the presidency of the G8 in 2013 and Hague, following a G8 Foreign Ministers meeting, commented that the UK was using this opportunity for the "G8 [to] agreed a landmark declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict" (Hansard, 2013b, Col 37). But the focus was on conflict and not conflict prevention. Women and sexual violence were also to form a major element of Greenings reports to Parliament over the year, with the subject being raised on eight substantive occasions. The DRC was again one of the main focus of attention where Greening reported DFID was providing an additional £5m for life-saving interventions for more than 130,000 individuals "to support protection for girls, women and children affected by conflict" (Hansard, 2013a, Col 284) and in November a further £21.6m in new funding to "help protect girls and women in emergencies", with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the DRC and Ethiopia singled out as examples of areas of focus (Hansard, 2013d, Col WS41). In June 2013, Hague, Hammond and Greening produced a joint written update to Parliament on conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping resources – the first major statement to Parliament on resources specifically for conflict prevention. As in the previous year, the peacekeeping budget (i.e. commitments to the UN) had first call on available resources – which was £435m in 2013/14; hence, the amount available for UK operations was £229m in that year. This was more than the previous year, but that sum had to be divided further between operational and structural conflict prevention; again, there is no real clarity of how the Coalition government was dividing its effort among its BSOS pillars[52].

[51] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1, 2, 3 (but statebuilding or structural conflict prevention?).
[52] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1, 6.

The dominant agenda for ministers in 2014 remained Afghanistan, Syria and women/girls; Nepal continued not to feature, and Sudan only achieved 15 mentions. Afghanistan was the highest scoring individual topic, but this was the year that the UK, along with other NATO nations, planned to extract itself from military operations. But there is an increase in the mention of conflict prevention. In 2014, a sense of what upstream conflict prevention had come to mean was emerging in the context of UK inter-departmental policy. The agenda was firmly rooted in women (and girls/children), sexual violence and peace and security. Hague, who appears to be driving the agenda (see Chapter 5) announced the UK's inter-departmental *Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2014–17* (FCO et al., 2014c) and associated Implementation Plan (FCO et al., 2014b). The Action Plan represents a step-change in macro government policy announcements[53]. Hague, noting the lead role the UK had at the United Nations Security Council on women, peace and security, set out "the results that we expect these [action plan] initiatives to bring. It serves to provide direction and vision for our staff and partners to ensure that women and girls are at the centre of all our efforts to prevent, resolve and respond to conflict" (Hansard, 2014e, Col 73WS). This theme continued after the July London Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Hague updated the Commons on the Summit and announced the UK's next steps, stating that the Foreign Office will "maintain preventing sexual violence in conflict as part of the core business of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office[54] as an essential aspect our work to prevent conflict, promote human rights, and exercise the soft power of the United Kingdom" (Hansard, 2014d, Col 42WS).

As with previous years, the MOD does not feature much in conflict prevention discussions as its focus remained firmly on Afghanistan withdrawal, Syria, the emerging conflict in Ukraine and tensions with Russia. The MOD was directly challenged in Parliament as to its actions relating to conflict prevention but, answering the question, Andrew Murrison (Con, PUSofS MOD) made reference to inter-departmental work on BSOS, training missions, the *MOD Defence Engagement Strategy* and "instilling what might be called the 'moral component'" (Hansard, 2014b, Col 548) in partner armed forces[55]. The response to the question was of little value and added nothing to the understanding of how the MOD was contributing to the operationalisation of BSOS with respect to structural conflict prevention.

The final substantive policy initiative also came in June 2014. Hague updated the Commons on funding for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities. With £444m allocated to UN peacekeeping the balance of £239m was available to the conflict pool (an increase of £10m on the previous year). The main reallocation of resources was between operational theatres which were adjusted to take account of a reduced Afghanistan commitment and increasing MENA needs. The focus of the conflict pool remains heavily geared to the day-to-day issues of operational conflict prevention rather than longer-term upstream structural conflict prevention which tends to suggest that upstream conflict prevention activities lay elsewhere in the aid budget and not those funds allocated to the conflict pool (and Stabilisation Unit). The South Asia programme, while focused on Pakistan and the border areas which certainly could be considered part of a longer-term programme of structural conflict prevention, also had elements focused on India-Pakistan relations, and in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The Africa programme again focuses on

[53] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 2; PPP Nos 1, 2 3, 4, 5.
[54] Hague was heavily influenced by his special advisor Arminka (now Baroness) Helić.
[55] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 2, 6 (a continuation of past MOD actions).

operational conflict prevention with funds focused on Somalia, Nigeria and the Sahel region although continuing commitments in north and South Sudan, Zimbabwe, east and central Africa and the African Union are all maintained. But there is no evidence of a major shift towards upstream conflict prevention as indicated by the BSOS and subsequent ministerial statements with its focus on governance and institutions[56]. Hague did announce the end of the conflict pool in its current form to be replaced with new £1 billion conflict, stability and security fund (CSSF) in financial year 2015–16. This new fund would "build on the existing conflict pool to help prevent conflict and tackle threats to UK interests" under the direction of the National Security Council and a more strategic cross-government approach contributing to "the Prime Minister's 'golden thread' theory of development" (Hansard, 2014a, Col 11WS). This reference to golden thread links to speeches by Cameron in 2012 and 2013. Cameron used the term golden thread at the UN in 2013 in relation to the MDGs where he said:

> … there's this new commitment to strong institutions and governance because these are essential to end conflict, to protect the rule of law, to stamp out corruption and insecurity and to hold governments accountable. This, I believe, is a totally new addition to the Millennium Development Goals: the importance of good governments, lack of corruption – what I call the golden thread of development (Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office, 2013).

The strong BSOS commitment to institutions and governance is not so obvious in government statements so one must look then to departments.

4.5 Departmental policy development

This section reviews the departmental policy that was subsequently issued under the Coalition government. The section identifies what policy emerged as a result of Coalition government political intent. It demonstrates that although there were bold political statements of intent regarding upstream it is difficult to get any clear evidence of the focus and priorities for departments. Arguably one is still faced with reasonable questions as to what precisely the government's upstream policy was. Drawing together the threads of departmental and inter-departmental policy, this section presents a view of what the Coalition government set out as policy.

Many of the policy documents are no longer available in their original Coalition government form but they were captured early in this project. In some way, if only small, all have some significance for conflict prevention, both structural and operational; hence, only the pertinent points relating to conflict prevention are focused upon in this thesis. This section reviews the policy statements of the FCO, DFID and MOD. What is presented is open to challenge as it is an interpretation of political intent and the resulting departmental actions. At no point was there a consolidated departmental or inter-departmental policy or strategy for upstream. Some 40 government and departmental publications (Annex A) were reviewed for statements relating to conflict prevention which were then captured in Nvivo for later analysis[57]. This review process resulted in 818 references which had some link to conflict prevention. Unsurprisingly, no SMART objectives were identified with respect to

[56] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 1.

[57] Main search for each of the documents included: building, conflict, governance, prevention, policy, stability, upstream. Documents were reviewed individually and text in any way relating to conflict prevention was captured.

structural conflict prevention. In presenting the upstream policy four topics are covered: the emergence of policy, priorities, themes and departmental plans.

4.5.1 The emergence of departmental policy – 2012–2015

In December 2012 a whole series of policy documents (see Annex A) were published. One has a view of departments, individually and collectively seeking to be seen to be carrying forward the intent of BSOS, although only three documents (of 14) had a specific reference to BSOS. Of specific interest to conflict prevention is firstly the publication of *Promoting Stability throughout the Western Balkans* (FCO et al., 2013b). While DFID was announcing the closure of its programmes in Kosovo and the former eastern bloc countries. the inter-departmental programme in the Balkans was continuing. The UK was providing: financial support to the reforms necessary for the EU accession in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo; the military regional reserve for peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina; support to the Srebrenica prosecutions team; and projects to support ethnic minorities to rebuild homes in Kosovo.

Another policy of interest is the *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012 revision)* (FCO et al., 2012a), which responded to Hague's initiative addressing UNSCR 1325. This policy sets out how the FCO, MOD and DFID would integrate women, peace and security into conflict policy in outline. As seen already, the significance of this plan, when coupled with the statements in Parliament, is the increasing focus on women in conflict and conflict prevention, albeit at this stage there is little detail. Departments updated this policy again in 2014 *(*FCO et al., 2014b), along with issuing *Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative* (FCO et al., 2014a)(PSVI). The 2014 Action Plan and associate Country Implementation Plan represented a step-change in the level of detail presented to Parliament. For the first time one sees a policy document, issued under the banner of the FCO, DFID and MOD, that not only focuses on a key conflict prevention issue but also has a level of detail that provides outcome, target country, indicators including timeframe and activity[58].

The year 2013 also saw another flurry of policy documentation. In February 2013, the MOD launched their *International Defence Engagement Strategy* (MOD, 2013a). Taking the document together with a joint statement by Hague and Hammond (below), there is evidence that conflict prevention has a very different meaning in the MOD than might be interpreted from the BSOS upstream pillar. The MOD listed four activities to achieve road normative objectives which are "Security and 'Non-Combat' Operations"; "Defence Diplomacy"; "Defence and Security Exports"; and of particular interest "Regional Stability, Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Stabilisation" but identifies no programmes and no resources (MOD, 2013a, p2-3). The policy document is more doctrine than measurable policy[59]. Launching the policy in a joint statement with Hague, Hammond wrote that "we are increasing our efforts to support security and justice sector reform and capacity building, which contribute to regional peace and security" (Hansard, 2013c, Col 22WS). Much of the focus, however, was on activities in Libya and Mogadishu. Hammond focused on taking advantage of the transition from combat operations in Afghanistan and the resultant availability of forces, and hence MOD was "exploring innovative ways of using

[58] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 3, 6 (but operational conflict prevention); PPP Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
[59] Table 3.2 Indicator -Incremental Nos 1, 3.

some army capabilities on a wide range of defence engagement tasks" (Hansard, 2013c, Col 22WS). However, as will be argued, the evidence for any increase in MOD structural conflict prevention tasks is less forthcoming. Finally, another key document had been published in April 2013; the tri-departmental "Conflict Pool Strategic Guidance" (FCO et al., 2013a). If anywhere was to issue clear guidance, it should have been in this document. There was a vision for the Conflict Pool which was to deliver:

> … measurable impact in the government's highest priority fragile and conflict affected states, in support of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy, using its comparative advantages of flexibility, blend of ODA and non-ODA resource, rapid response, and scope for innovation and risk-taking" (FCO et al., 2013a, p3).

There was a whole section on upstream conflict prevention which reiterated much of the BSOS including: inclusive political systems; security and justice; and capacity in local populations and institutions. The future shape of the Conflict Pool programme included the requirement for more resources to work "further upstream both in countries/regions that have not yet experienced conflict and those where the objective is to avoid a return to conflict" (FCO et al., 2013a, p19). But, once again, there was no detail[60].

4.5.2 Policy vision, themes, priorities and resources

This sub-section focuses specifically on the major elements that the Coalition government/departmental structural conflict prevention policy identified. Structural conflict prevention is a long-term process that requires a strategic approach, yet the themes developed by departments demonstrate no real evidence of the commitment necessary. To play a strategic part in this kind of development would require a very different mindset in donor government thinking than the approach that was being presented. The meaning of conflict prevention, and how the UK government would go about supporting states in the process of prevention remains broadly unclear in the documents. What policies that do emerge are normative statements of good practice; there is an emphasis on technical supporting projects rather than the political nature of conflict prevention[61]. DFID retained the bulk of the resources and was the lead on policy. Governance was a key theme of the DFID's BAR process, although neither of the policy implementation studies, Nepal and South Sudan, feature in regard to capacity and institutions even if programmes were conducted. The other major theme that impacted on conflict prevention was security and justice which had replaced Security Sector Reform (SSR) in DFID's programme; again, this is examined in the policy implementation studies. Also, as policy was more normative, one must look towards business plans, where they were published, for more information regarding how macro policy was being operationalised. Again, drawing on the indicators in Table 3.2, there is evidence of the departments, particularly DFID and MOD, learning lessons from past interventions and translating this into doctrine rather than structural conflict prevention policy that could be operationalised. If, as with the politics and policy theory, the political class were looking to departments to bring forward the policies so that

[60] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1, 2, 6; PPP Nos 2, 3, 4, 5 (but absence of political window and no follow through).
[61] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 6 and the absence of PPP Nos 1, 2 (problem recognised but no policies).

the upstream agenda could be taken to the next level then it was not to happen from the normative policies that emerged. There was no coalition of problem, policy and politics.

In terms of themes and actions structural conflict prevention can be all-encompassing, which makes it challenging to separate out the distinction between those actions specifically aimed at preventing political and social conflict boiling over into violent conflict and those with a wider statebuilding and poverty reduction agenda. In this thesis the focus therefore has been on those specific themes identified in the BSOS: governance (capacity and institutions); justice and rights; security, protection and sexual violence; and wealth creation. These themes relate well to the themes identified in the World Bank report and academic literature but with one significant absence – the importance of politics in the process of conflict prevention[62]. It is worth emphasising that the 2011 World Bank Development report, which was clearly influential and had been quoted by government, indicates a typical timeline for governance transformations in the twentieth century: bureaucracy – 20 years; corruption – 27 years; government effectiveness – 36 years; rule of law – 41 years (World Bank, 2011, p11 quoting Pritchett and de Weijer 2010).

Leaving aside the tendency for repetition of the BSOS upstream statements in the various policy statements published by departments, several points are worth noting. There is no clear vision in the policy documents as to how conflict prevention was to be carried out[63]. There is a very clear evidence that aid and UK's security are linked, and hence one might reasonably expect efforts to be focused in that direction; indeed, for example, there is some evidence of this in the case of Pakistan. Responding to the ID Committee's report on fragile states the government makes the point that DFID was "ensuring that upstream conflict prevention and efforts to tackle poverty are built into our programmes in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way" (ID Cttee, 2012c, p5). Pakistan was also a focus for MOD and the FCO given the linkage with UK Pakistani populations, the potential for India/Pakistan tensions, the link with extremism and the link with Afghanistan. There are also very clear statements that the UK should commit to addressing instability overseas as it is "both morally right and in Britain's national interest" (ID Cttee, 2012c, p5); in this respect and with reference to this thesis policy implementation studies, South Sudan and Nepal were two potential upstream targets given the long engagement the UK had had with both but neither feature well.

Setting priorities across a wide and varied area of government policy is challenging but also important. Arguably, policy needs to set goals and objectives to direct departments but also to set a level of expectation for public and Parliamentary scrutiny. This is particularly important for a whole-of-government approach. The public and Parliament also need to recognise the challenges of achieving success given that the UK is but one actor in structural conflict prevention and does not own the problem let alone have responsibility for delivering structural stability; but the language does not always reflect the relatively small part played. Nonetheless, priorities focus effort and resources and are therefore an important management tool to manage expectations in relation to crisis response, poverty alleviation and structural conflict prevention. Identifying priorities for upstream, either at a government or departmental level, is far from straightforward. To do so would have required top-down

[62] This issue will be returned to in the next chapter.
[63] Table 3.2 Indicator – PPP No 1 (absence of new ideas).

direction and a common understanding of the meaning of upstream conflict prevention; there are strong indications that there was no common view.

The BSOS provides direction on how much resource (30 per cent by 2014/15) was to be applied to "fragile states" but has little to say on the priority of, or within, the upstream conflict prevention pillar[64]. There is specific direction relating to "the highest priority countries such as Afghanistan and Somalia where the threats to our interests are most immediate" (HMG, 2011, para 7.1), but how much of this was structural, longer-term initiatives is again left to departments. From the perspective of this research both these countries, while having elements of long-term statebuilding aspects to them, were both very much in crisis. So, given the UK economic context of government austerity in which the BSOS was launched, and the security interests of the UK, a reasonable expectation of a new approach to aid and intervention policy might be to provide guiding policy on where inter-departmental action was to focus its efforts. But there is little in the BSOS, and it was left up to the DFID to decide on priorities through the BAR as DFID still held much of the available funding. This resulted in a very much bottom-up approach, given the way in which the BAR was developed.

At a macro policy level *UK aid: Changing lives, delivering results* provided very clear direction on priorities for "fragile" states which were closely linked to DFID core business to: "halve malaria deaths in the ten worst affected countries by 2015" (DFID, 2011c, p16); give "people a voice" and meet their expectations and priorities which DFID argued was "education, water and health" (DFID, 2011c, p21). From a cross-government perspective DFID's focus was on identifying "the top priorities for Britain's response to climate change" (DFID, 2011c, p23) through the International Climate Fund. Certainly, the UK government's efforts to address climate change is contributing to local conflict prevention as it is often the marginalised and most vulnerable who are most at risk – which can be an underlying tension and trigger. Also, DFID had reduced its focus to 27 countries but this list of countries has been contentious; this resulted in questions over what the Coalition government meant by "fragile states" and whether that meaning was shared across the departments[65]. From a DFID perspective, the selection of states to support was informed by a formula set out in the BAR Technical Report but the underlying data used in the formulae was not published and, when the list was published, inevitably there were comments around countries included and excluded. Sir Hugh Bayley[66] (Interview No 3, 2017) was critical of the approach as was the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) who were sufficiently seized by DFID's published list that they produced a report about country selection. While broadly welcoming the BAR and reduction in the number of countries supported, the report commented on the formula and "the lack of objective criteria used to select focus countries, the lack of transparency of this process and the poor quality of some of the information on which these decisions were made" (Africa APPG, 2012, p6). Furthermore, the Africa APPG was also critical of the use of the Needs-Effectiveness Index in that it "was used to provide *ex post* justification for the country selection, rather than to aid the actual decisions" (Africa APPG, 2012, p8). Sir Hugh Bayley, the Chair of the Group at the time commented that "if small change in data could cause wide swing in outcome then it is not a good formula" and that it would have been better to have two formulae which would select "which ten to twelve fragile states you work in with your 30 per cent [funding allocation to fragile states] and a different

[64] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 1.
[65] The only lists identified were in the BAR and the country priorities of the SU issued in 2014.
[66] MP and member of the ID Committee.

formulae for poverty" (Interview No 3, 2017)[67]. As a result, it is not possible from the published policy, to get any real understanding of whether the country or regional focus was primarily motivated by poverty reduction or other drivers of instability. The second source of priorities is the Stabilisation Unit Business Plan issued for 2014/15 but, again, there is no clarity of the relative effort within and between those countries deemed in crisis and those requiring structural support (Stabilisation Unit, 2014a). Given this lack of clarity the next source to examine is departmental business plans.

4.5.3 Departmental business plans

Due to the lack of clear policy guidance, this sub-section turns the attention on business plans. To be fair, policy priorities for the other BSOS pillars did no better than upstream conflict prevention. What also becomes clear is how little of BSOS results in policy with any real measurable objectives. What SMART[68] objectives exist tend to relate to achieving the 0.7 per cent of GNI and the 30 per cent to be allocated to fragile states by 2014/15; these are the keynote political promises and benchmarks that are then picked up in Parliament. It is unsurprising that, with such a high level of commitment and scrutiny focused on these financial goals, spend becomes a significant measure of success; but this also has implications for departmental and staff behaviours as will be seen. Indeed, DFID country plans are no clearer as to how the intent of BSOS for upstream was to be executed. While the ICAI and ID Committee focused on a programme and project level, scrutiny at a Parliamentary level tended to focus on the 0.7 per cent financial goal. The DFID 2011 Plan (pre-BSOS) prioritised Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa, supporting SDSR and the NSC, promoting the Arms Trade Treaty and improving investments in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Although updated in 2012, the DFID plan takes cognisance of BSOS but did not result in any change in the direction of travel.

Identifying conflict prevention policy objectives from the FCO and MOD was even more difficult. For the FCO and MOD there is little evidence of their specific policy objectives beyond broad statements of intent and one must review retrospective annual report to Parliament for any detail. Of the Conflict Pool resources, the largest proportion (some 68 per cent over the period 2011–2015) funded peacekeeping (UN) operations. On the balance of funds, it is difficult to identify the split between rapid crisis response and upstream conflict prevention, but the highest proportion was to conflict areas (Afghanistan, Middle East and North Africa took 58 per cent of the resources in 2013/14 and 2014/15). Taken with the Stabilisation Unit priorities and funding allocation, it could be argued that in the period of the Coalition government, upstream was not receiving any significant funding when compared to the size of the aid budget. Funding alone is not a good measure of potential involvement let alone outcomes, but it provides useful insights into the relative value, and therefore effort, that was being applied to structural conflict prevention.

4.5.3.1 Business plans for conflict prevention

Evidence of ODA spending (DFID, 2016b, p11, p13 & p15) indicates that, of the bilateral aid budget (averaging 60 per cent annually of total ODA), DFID by the end of the Parliament were still responsible for spending some 80 per cent of ODA. It is therefore not

[67] This view was rejected by other interviewees questioned on the issue.
[68] SMART – Specificity, Measurability, Achievability, Relevance, Time-bound.

unreasonable for much of the attention in this thesis to be on DFID[69]. By 2015 DFID were allocating £1.018 billion to their Governance and Civil Society programmes (rising from £705 million in 2011/12) and the CSSF/Conflict Pool had also increased significantly to £324 million, with the majority (75 per cent) spent by the FCO for UN peacekeeping with DFID the next largest spender (20 per cent). There was a very small use of the conflict fund by the MOD, National Crime Agency and Home Office. However, interpreting the available data to understand how, from just these two funding lines, the Coalition government's upstream pillar was being supported is far from straightforward. One must look to business plans, annual reports and, for the policy implementation studies, track project and programme reports.

Below is an overview of the main themes that emerge from an examination of Whitehall reports and plans. With both the FCO and MOD there is little clarity of their specific activities or objectives beyond broad statements of intent. With the FCO there is no evidence of what they sought to achieve at a regional or country level through diplomatic means other than from Hague's speeches already covered, and their annual Human Rights Report – the main source for this research. Likewise, there are few published statements on what the MOD had achieved or intended to do in order to support the BSOS and upstream structural conflict prevention.

4.5.3.2 FCO, MOD and Conflict Pool funding

From the perspective of the FCO, there are some expressions of general intent in their 2012 *Human Rights and Democracy* Report. There is specific reference to "preventing torture, abolishing the death penalty, increasing people's freedom of expression, giving people freedom of religious belief, achieving gender equality and enabling them to take part in free elections" with funding "to make criminal justice systems fairer" and supporting "freedom of expression, including on the Internet" (FCO et al., 2012b). The government intent to support the International Criminal Court is also explicit and commits to action through its embassies, high commissions and the UN Security Council to build consensus "to enforce cooperation and to take effective action against those who fail to cooperate" (FCO, 2013). However, a 2016 report by the Foreign Affairs Committee, reviewing the Coalition government and one year of the subsequent Conservative government, was not entirely supportive of government efforts. The report criticised the lack of measurable targets notwithstanding the difficulty of measurement (FA Cttee, 2016)[70]. In all, it has been difficult to understand let alone track the FCO's role in upstream conflict prevention.

As mentioned, the MOD *Defence Engagement Strategy* was more generic than specific, but the MOD annual reports do provide some evidence of conflict prevention activities, albeit at times at a very low level. For example, there is evidence of the activities of the Africa-based peace support teams but there was no discernible increase in activity after the BSOS. The MOD did take on Afghan officer training in 2013 as a ten-year commitment that matched its Defence Engagement Strategy objectives. The MOD's 2013 update on the transformation of the Army, addressing Defence Engagement, offered no more tangible evidence of the conflict prevention operations; it did note that "upstream engagement if properly targeted and resourced" (MOD, 2013b, p21) should deliver benefits

[69] In 2015 ODA allocations were: DFID – £9.767 billion 80.5%; FCO – 3.2%; DECC – 2.8%; CSSF/Conflict Pool – 2.7%; Home Office – 1.8%; others – 2.7%.
[70] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental No 1.

to the UK by reducing the need to deploy in the future. The task was assigned to the First (UK) Division, but there is no evidence that this led to any substantive change in MOD approach. This was perhaps another lost opportunity to demonstrate how the long-established peace support teams could have been built upon for conflict prevention and defence engagement activities. MOD annual reports to Parliament provide retrospective overviews of activities, albeit a rather glossy view of outcomes. Reviewing the 2014/15 report, one gets an impression of the range of activities being undertaken by the MOD that directly support BSOS intent, but there is neither evidence of priorities at a country/theme level nor reference to the BSOS policy and inter-departmental activities. Extracting directly from the 2015 report below (MOD, 2015), one gains some understanding of the type of activity being conducted in key countries/activities. For example:

- **Pakistan**. The UK maintains a close and wide-ranging relationship with Pakistan, principally through regular Ministerial and military-to-military contacts. We continue to provide training and support to Pakistan's Armed Forces, particularly with regard to their capacity to tackle and defeat improvised explosive devices (IED).

- **Nigeria**. The abduction of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in north-east Nigeria in April 2014 brought into sharp relief the threat posed by the Boko Haram insurgency and led to the MOD providing military support to the Nigerian government, initially to help search for the schoolgirls and subsequently to contribute to the broader struggle against Boko Haram.

- **South Sudan**. The UK also provides military personnel to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). In support of the UN Mission in South Sudan a C-130 aircraft deployed to the country on 26 March 2015 in order to provide the UN with much needed air transport support. The aircraft flew 11 missions between Juba and Malakal, moving freight and vehicles before it returned to the UK on 12 April 2015.

- **Capacity Building and International Defence Training**. During 2014–15, MOD has provided over three thousand education and training places in UK domestic and overseas institutions to international military and civilian officials from almost one hundred countries. As part of capacity building, training teams have delivered training in twenty countries enhancing knowledge and leadership, professionalism and understanding, promoting governance and international law. Following the ground-breaking Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context course delivered in Burma in early 2014 – the first Defence Engagement course since independence in 1947 – the training team returned a year later to continue to support accountability, transparency, rule of law, and human rights.

As can be seen the activity confirms the broadly low level, tactical nature of the MOD's activities[71], albeit arguably some of those activities can have an effect that exceeds the tactical (e.g. counter-narcotics). The South Sudan deployment typifies the UK's approach to UN operations in that the UK did not commit badly needed experienced combat troops but rather deployed engineering and logistic capabilities. However, it has not been possible to identify the impact of soft power of either the FCO or MOD activities. The 2015 Strategic

[71] Table 3.2 Indicator – Incremental Nos 1 2,3,4, 6.

Defence Review did continue the theme of moving upstream, resulting eventually in Specialised Infantry Battalions to work by, with a through partner forces to "conduct defence engagement and capacity building" (HMG, 2015, p31). However, this continues the trend of working predominantly at the tactical level. This upstream effort has been addressed in a series of articles edited by Clack and Johnson (2019) and identifies the ongoing conceptual and practical difficulties for the MOD of moving upstream.

Of the Conflict Pool resources, the largest proportion (some 68 per cent over the period 2011–2015) funded peacekeeping (UN) operations. Of the balance of fund, it is difficult to split between rapid crisis response and upstream conflict prevention but, based on the regional allocations, the highest proportion was to conflict areas (Afghanistan, Middle East and North Africa took 58 per cent of the resources in 2013/14 and 2014/15). Without knowing the detailed split between operational and structural conflict prevention it is difficult to judge whether there was any movement towards upstream structural conflict prevention. However, just taking out Afghanistan and the early action facility (the reserve) reduces the funds available by 28 per cent, noting that there were also other operational conflict prevention activities in Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen that cannot be split out at this level of detail. The issue of resource allocation is further complicated by how the Stabilisation Unit was allocating and apportioning resources. In the Stabilisation Unit Business Plan issues in March 2014, for High Priority Upstream Conflict Prevention the plan lists Libya, Somalia and Afghanistan – three countries where there was arguably more crisis response than upstream activities (Stabilisation Unit, 2014a, Section 4, p8). Furthermore, the Stabilisation Unit categorised the North and West Africa, DRC, South Sudan, Nigeria Pakistan and Burma all under upstream conflict prevention and only Syria (High Priority), Ukraine (Medium Priority) and Central African Republic (Low Priority) under "Crisis". But, without knowing the next level of detail of what the UK's objectives in these countries were, it is not possible to judge the split of activity between crisis response and upstream.

4.5.3.3 DFID

Reviewing the DFID 2012 Business Plan which followed the BAR in March 2011, the DFID 2011 Business Plan in May 2011, and the BSOS in July 2011, there were some revisions that indicate some attention had been paid to the BSOS. The DFID 2011 Business Plan had already reflected the move towards supporting "fragile states" and the 2012 Business Plan priorities reflected no change and no further move upstream. However, there are changes that reflect events in 2011 in that the 2012 Business Plans. The 2011 Plan had already committed DFID to: prioritising Afghanistan and Pakistan; improving effectiveness in the Horn of Africa; supporting SDSR and the NSC; promoting the Arms Trade Treaty; and improve investments in fragile and conflict-affected countries. The 2012 Plan's additions included: a new security and justice programme in "12 fragile and conflict-affected states"; greater focus on Burma; reference to the need to "build on the New Deal and focus on South Sudan" which, as will be seen, did not get off the ground (DFID, 2012a, p10-11). It seems that, while cognisance of both BSOS and the New Deal had been taken, there was no resultant impact on the direction of travel. A further indicator in structural conflict prevention funding comes from the DFID Development Tracker website; a screen shot at Figure 4.2 indicates the small amount of funding that was finding its way into what is described as conflict prevention.

Figure 4.2 – Development Tracker Screen Shot – Conflict Prevention and Resolution Programme (DFID, 2017)

Again, there are issues with understanding this data as there are no timelines or programme/project allocations below this level. This summary data is an amalgamation of programme and project data that covers both development and conflict prevention activities across DFID's programme over the years in question. The key point being that, taken with the Stabilisation Unit priorities and funding allocation, there is a clear suggestion that in the period of the Coalition government, upstream was not receiving any significant funding when compared to the size of the aid budget. While funding alone is not a good measure of potential involvement let alone outcomes it still provides some useful insights into the relative value, and therefore staff effort, that was being applied to structural conflict prevention.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter began by looking at the emergence of the BSOS and BAR and how they set the conditions for upstream structural conflict prevention. Finding little in the way of government macro policy objectives beyond broad intent, the next stage was to review departmental and inter-departmental policy; again, what was found was more normative and could not easily be operationalised. Finally, departmental business plans and reports on actions were reviewed, but these too gave little clarity of what was to be done and not much indication that much was achieved. What one finds is that the political intent set out in 2011 was not translated into clear policy that could then be operationalised. Structures and processes were put in place to improve inter-departmental coordination but there are also some gaps: arguably primarily in the direction provided by the NSC in order to drive a strategic approach to where, when and how for upstream. However, the attempt at drawing together the threads of investing in upstream demonstrates the lack of overall coherence in the government's and inter-departmental policy. But the mainly internal-to-government BSOS strategy to develop a new way of focusing on upstream was not taken forward in any logical way, notwithstanding the evidence of normative policies building on past experience and lessons from previous interventions. There is evidence that all the levers for conflict prevention are represented; however, there is little of substance across the whole programme in which to hold the government to account.

The issue of *how* upstream was to be addressed remained unanswered. There is no evidence of clear objectives or policies being brought forward by government or departments. The question remains why this happened and what were the implications?

Hence the next chapter examines several key issues that have surfaced in this chapter. Those issues are directly linked to the view taken in this thesis that politics should have been leading efforts to improve the UK's conflict prevention activities. This was not just the realm of a departmental institutional or programmatic approach through programmes and projects (e.g. statebuilding). The next chapter seeks to unpick some of the issues that contributed to the incoherence of approach.

Chapter 5 – Whitehall politics and policy

5.1 Introduction

Drawing on policy theory and the policy indicators, and spotlighting the research question, this chapter explains *why* policy and subsequently strategy and actions did not emerge from Whitehall in any coherent way. The chapter draws heavily on interviews with senior politicians, their special advisors, senior and middle-ranking civil servants all directly involved at the time with BSOS and subsequent policy development. The chapter is in two parts focusing on why the government failed to create the right conditions for departments to operationalise the political intent and then why policy broadly remained normative and largely unsuitable for operationalisation. The concepts and frameworks of conflict prevention identified in Chapters 1 and 2, together with the policy theories and indicators in Table 3.2 that might have guided policy development, provide a basis upon which to assess why policy and effective action did not emerge from Whitehall. Hence, it is reasonable to assess what happened taking account of the frameworks of conflict prevention highlighted in Chapter 2 along with the suggested best practice in policy, strategy and policy theory as indicated in Chapter 3.

This chapter argues that the BSOS upstream pillar had not been thought through sufficiently and lacked substance in policy, strategy and implementation planning. It is argued that policy writers were neither drawing on experience of conflict prevention nor under any clear political direction with a clear inter-departmental understanding of the ends, ways and means of upstream. This resulted in a bottom-up technical approach that, at best, was ad hoc and varied in execution with the country team skills available. While BSOS brought a new focus on upstream, it is argued that there was insufficient political capital[72] expended to drive forward the initiative either at home or, importantly, in the execution phase with elites in target states. This latter issue will be addressed in the policy implementation studies (Chapters 6–8). As seen in Chapter 4, some structures and processes were improved in Whitehall, but there were also some gaps; primarily in the direction provided by the NSC in order to drive a strategic approach to the where and when for upstream. The upstream focus was on post-conflict Libya which never materialised but, initially, that would have been classified as stabilisation not structural conflict prevention[73]. While the threads of upstream are apparent, they are not brought together, hence the lack of overall coherence or substance in the government and inter-departmental policy development and execution planning. The problem for the Coalition government and departments was that, while on the surface the vision of moving upstream might have seemed straightforward, conflict prevention was still abstract without a clear understanding of how the concepts would translate into practical interventions as, at the time, there was little practical experience upon which to draw lessons to further develop policy. Nor were new ideas coming forward from research.

5.2 Preparing wider government for preventative diplomacy

This section addresses why government intent was not subsequently translated into effect within departments. Drawing on interviews and theory, the basis of this section is to

[72] Political capital – a conceptualization of power and influence derived through relationships, trust, goodwill and influence among politicians.

[73] The overlap of stabilisation operations and structural conflict prevention operations is acknowledged.

demonstrate that the implications of the BSOS upstream pillar had not been thought through at the highest level. This is commensurate with Lund's (2009) view that the international community was failing to draw lessons from recent experience and there remained a gap between the promise of conflict prevention and its more deliberate pursuit. Lund had identified the link between early warning and use of his preventative diplomacy toolbox which mirrors the BSOS Early Warning and upstream pillars. However, by 2015, under the Coalition government, the problem identified by Lund remained; upstream action was not emerging in policy terms or arguably since then either.

Certainly, there was a strong intent of government to move upstream with conflict prevention even though a coherent policy did not emerge from Whitehall. Despite evidence of a strong sense of upstream being the right way to go forward, there was a lack of commitment by government ministers to driving an upstream agenda. This resulted in a weak pillar of government strategy as ministers are responsible for setting the agenda, particularly where extant policy and policy tools are not well developed within departments.

5.2.1 BSOS intent did not lead to an implementation strategy

As a document BSOS emerged from staff-level inter-departmental discussions and from the DFID point of view built on their *Building Peaceful States and Societies* and "ministers were not resistant to it" (Interview No 25, 2019, p1). But the concept of upstream, Baroness Helić stated, "came out of William Hague's office" and came from:

> A frustration that he, and us as his advisors, were deeply affected by, because so many times things that could and should have been prevented were not, and things would be left to deteriorate to the point of being a serious threat to our national security or interests (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

Baroness Helić added that "you could not call it 'preventive intervention' because that was George Bush's way, but we called it 'upstream intervention' by really thinking about upstream diplomacy" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1). The BSOS was widely welcomed when it came out[74]; Pugh et al. commented that "a number of development NGOs and leading experts issued a range of support for the Coalition's approach from qualified, to the outwardly exuberant (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development)" (Pugh et al., 2013, p198). Commenting on the strategy Pugh et al., supported by some NGOs, were of the view that, contrary to there being a securitisation of aid, there was a "developmentisation of security" (Pugh et al., 2013, p193). Pugh et al. were of the view that, under the Coalition government, there had been a move away from Blair's cosmopolitan interventionalism, that emphasised capacity building mirroring UK values and systems, towards "emphasising empowerment, prevention and the agency of post-conflict and post-colonial subjects" (Pugh et al., 2013, p199). Again, providing an insight from the very top of the Coalition government, Baroness Helić commented that:

> It was not that there was a rejection of Tony Blair's humanitarian intervention but there was a realisation that you don't even have to intervene for the reasons of humanitarian intervention if you intervene in the upstream way. So, how far upstream should you go; I personally think you should go as soon as possible.

[74] See Chapter 4.

> That is why we have intelligence services and they are usually three years ahead of us (FCO) (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

One sees evidence of the early optimism from government and experts. On the face of it the conditions were right for a step-change in direction. Linking to Table 3.2, there was political leadership, the problem was identified, there seemed to be a window of opportunity and experts in the field were welcoming the change in approach. So why were policies not forthcoming and being taken up by government and departments? Why was the intent coming out of the FCO and the BSOS, together with departmental policies, not creating the political conditions for a whole-of-government approach?

With the publication of the BSOS, one might have expected that the BSOS, and other follow-on government and departmental policies, would set out in clearer terms how the new direction was to be implemented. In some respects, this was achieved with the refocused aid budget through the DFID BAR published in March 2011 (in advance of the BSOS). However, the case for a refocused policy and clear strategy for structural upstream conflict prevention is not evident, even when taking note of the likely need for a degree of government confidentiality given the sensitivity of the issue. The first critical observation of the BSOS, the start point of this research, is that it is anything but a strategy.

In Chapter 3, Rumelt's (2012) views on good strategy[75] were set out as one of the yard sticks. The Coalition government's Strategic Defence and Security Review[76] had already announced a new strategy for fragile states that indicated more effort and more funding. If good strategy begins with a clear the diagnosis of the issue, then BSOS falls short. The focus of the BSOS text is on the nature and problems of failed states, instability and conflict; but, importantly, there was no analysis of what the UK had been doing and where it had been falling short. There are examples of the UK's successes but as an overall analysis of the problems experienced by the UK's efforts the analysis is incomplete. Taking this point further, there is a mismatch with the problem diagnosis that focuses on failed states and the high-level guiding policy and coherent actions which makes a leap to what internal (to the UK) actions the UK should do. If the diagnosis is on the problems of failed states, then one might expect the guiding policy and coherent action would also focus on failed states. While the purpose of the BSOS strategy is articulated as aiming "to address instability and conflict overseas … by using all of our diplomatic, development, military and security tools" (HMG, 2011, p4), the "BSOS focus is on how we can improve the effectiveness of our efforts" (HMG, 2011, p4), but without clearly identifying what was being done well and where lessons could be learnt.

The BSOS actions are predominantly inward looking not outward in terms of the UK's role in the "what", "why" and "how" of our diplomatic, development and military tools, let alone "where", "when" and with "what" resource. What was needed was clearer strategic direction from ministers as to how they wanted to go about preventing conflicts from turning violent. Vision and subsequent policy direction can come from ministers or from options presented to ministers by officials. However, in the case of upstream Baroness Helić suggests that the vision and direction for conflict prevention policy was not developed because:

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[75] A diagnosis, a guiding policy and coherent action.
[76] Published 19 October 2010, in advance of BSOS.

> ... it did not have time; your policies have to be embedded but not only on paper, they have to be embedded in practice, and I don't think it got embedded into practice (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

This was not just a failure to translate intent into policy but also a failure of vision and real understanding of what needed to be done in order to turn intent into practice. Baroness Helić added that:

> You have to be a foreign policy aficionado, you have to know how to bring your Foreign Office, and Trade and DFID in there so that you have a package to intervene (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

It was clear from the interview that, from Baroness Helić's perspective, the skills at the top of government and departments, to bring together the levers of government and focus them on upstream were not there. Nor did BSOS create the conditions for this refocusing to happen notwithstanding the formation of the NSC.

Turning to the formation of the NSC, this was a successful step in bringing about more focused attention on international issues. Importantly, the NSC gave DFID a permanent seat at the top table of international affairs. Andrew Mitchell recalls that:

> DFID's voice on upstream was heard; definitely in the 2011 discussions and of course in the Strategic Defence Review. Did we do enough on upstream – we can probably never do enough but we were certainly aware of the vital nature of that work (Interview No 27, 2019, p1).

While the NSC may have considered upstream conflict prevention, the available evidence suggests that many of the issues of upstream did not make it to the top table given the Arab Spring. Lord Ricketts recalls that "the NSC was determined to learn lessons from Iraq and ensure that, before conflict broke out, there was good planning/preparation for the post-conflict. So DFID was tasked to lead planning" (Interview No 28, 2019, p1). But that comment suggests a focus on the inevitability of conflict in the case of Libya. Hence, with the NSC focused on Libya and the Arab Spring, which was arguably stabilisation not upstream structural conflict prevention, any progress on structural conflict prevention needed to be driven from elsewhere but this was lacking too. Again, it is worth recalling the comment by Lord Ricketts (Introduction Chapter 2) that the pressures on politicians kept their focus on the short term due to the "tyranny of the immediate" (Ricketts, 2019). Baroness Helić recalled that:

> We got caught in it [Arab Spring], there was no preventing any more. You had Tunisia, which everyone got surprised by, then you had Libya, then you had Egypt, one after the other; there was nothing to prevent" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

The key issue is that BSOS was anything but a high-level strategy and the upstream pillar did not get the subsequent high-level political attention and focused drive at the government level. There is more evidence of NSC and departmental focus on early warning and rapid response which was more successful. That is not to argue that upstream should have got a higher priority over rapid crisis response and development activities. Rather, it is

suggested that a key government intent was not met, and this had implications for the subsequent use of taxpayers' money in execution programmes. While there might have been a window of opportunity for government policy and action to develop for upstream it was open for a very short time and, all too soon, the opportunity was lost. As identified in Chapter 3 (and with the selected policy implementation studies), there were states in which a structural conflict prevention approach might have been appropriate, but the political attention was elsewhere and departments were not well positioned to take initiative on behalf of ministers (see following sections). Nor at any point does one get the view that ministers had the conceptual thinking, building on the Chapter 2 frameworks that were available at that time, to take forward upstream. This is true also of how government actions for conflict prevention, pre- and post-violence, might differ. Furthermore, there is no clarity as to how, after widespread violence, conflict prevention actions integrate into wider peacebuilding, statebuilding and development activities. Reflecting on Table 3.2 indicators, this was not policy and strategy at the highest level emerging through either an incremental approach or problems identified with politics and policy converging to address them.

5.2.2 No clear direction poses challenges for a whole-of-government approach

In government, and business, organisational structures are often an early target for change after strategic adjustments; the Coalition government was no different. In addition to the formation of the NSC, there was to be a drive to a whole-of-government approach. Initially, a BSOS Board had been formed to look across departments and ministers where there were cross-cutting responsibilities. One interviewee indicated that the BSOS Board was established at too junior a level to make any difference and by 2013 there are indications that it was abandoned. The other major structural initiative of the Coalition government was the emphasis on whole-of-government, be it hierarchical or procedural[77]. Despite the rhetoric, in BSOS upstream did not result in a whole-of-government approach.

A "hierarchical version" of whole-of-government sees the political and administrative leadership as homogeneous and in agreement about the use of whole-of-government approaches. This tends towards a centralised approach as happened under Blair (for example, in Sierra Leone) which was arguably continued under the Coalition government in respect to Libya through the NSC. But the extent to which the NSC created an effective hierarchical structure to drive the wider objectives of upstream is challenged as there are other aspects of a hierarchical approach (joint objectives, strategy, etc.) that are missing for upstream. While there is evidence that Hague, Fox and Mitchell were fully in line with the thinking behind the BSOS at a conceptual level, this thesis argues that this was never fully developed and implemented within departments. For a hierarchical approach this would require very clear centralised direction as to the where, and when if not the how of policy execution. As indicated already this direction was not present.

An alternative approach to whole-of-government is a procedural version which emphasises effectiveness, broader long-term "ownership" interests, and greater "outcome

[77] Whole-of-government emerged in the UK at the turn of the century after two decades of New Public Management (NPM) reforms. See CHRISTENSEN, T. & LÆGREID, P. 2007. The Whole-of-government Approach to Public Sector Reform. *Public Administration Review*, 67**,** 1059-1066. Whole-of-government has been defined as "public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issue" *ibid.* Two versions of the structural whole-of-government were considered by Christensen and Lægreid; a hierarchical version and a more procedural version but neither seem to have impacted upstream.

focus" (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007, p1061 quoting Boston & Eichbaum). This approach requires a higher degree of "negotiative features, whether inside the cabinet, between ministries and departments involved in inter-sectoral task forces, programs, or projects" (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007, p1061). Again, it is argued that for upstream the BSOS did not establish sufficiently robust conditions for a procedural version which would have required much greater clarity of purpose for upstream with arguably specific objectives to which government and departments would work towards. Certainly, there is reference to the production of integrated country strategies for key countries and regions, and intent to agree shared objectives but this places the onus on the next level of government to agree to a way forward. As will be seen, in the case of South Sudan the joint analysis process failed, and no joint analysis was found for Nepal.

Another example of the whole-of-government approach was the introduction of a new inter-departmental process for joint analysis of conflict and security (JACS) which was highlighted in the BSOS. JACS was seen as a key element of the integrated approach but it probably came too late to influence UK actions in South Sudan (see Chapter 6). It is worth noting however that, in relation to South Sudan and on a broader point, one senior civil servant commented that:

> In theory the JACS should have been a very useful tool under the terms of conflict prevention. The reality was that it didn't survive departmental interests, departmental structures and also because it was a very DFID dominated platform, as Kenya had been before, the level of political analysis was quite limited. So, in Kenya we had been caught by surprise in 2008 and we were caught by surprise in South Sudan in 2013…. In both instances we did not have the primacy of the traditional FCO led analysis which would have been focused more on politics. Instead you had development actors who had a very different agenda (Interview No 10, 2017, p1).

But, Mitchell had placed development "at the heart of an integrated approach" to support vulnerable people and protect "Britain from external threats"; Mitchell had emphasised that the UK's "upstream offer on conflict prevention must be as good as the one we have honed for 'downstream' during and in the aftermath of war" (Mitchell, 2010). The inference being that at the time conflict prevention thinking, policy and approach was not as mature as the UK government's policy and approach to military-supported interventions. That is not to suggest that military intervention was effective in preventing conflict. While there is clear indication of top-level alignment for upstream, how this continued through to inter-departmental implementation for medium- to long-term actions for structural conflict prevention is much less clear.

As has been seen (Chapter 4 and Annex A), the policy documents released on a joint basis by departments were more normative than of substance. From the documents there are clearly efforts at learning from past experiences and setting out, in almost a doctrinal, rational way, how the UK should consider dealing with the problems. However, it might be argued that much was based on the lessons of crisis response. Of course, there is an argument to suggest that a whole-of-government approach is less appropriate for upstream as this is more aligned with development and DFID. However, this view is rejected as a whole-of-government approach needs to be considered at the upstream stage. Even if there is a lesser role for the MOD, for example, there is still the potential for UK police and military to be engaged in institutional development of the internal security infrastructure of the target state

as part of a conflict prevention and statebuilding agenda. This whole-of-government approach was taken further by the Conservative Government Fusion (HMG, 2018) doctrine[78] but the outcome is beyond this research. However, in relation to the BSOS there is evidence that under the Coalition government, and since, structural upstream conflict prevention from a whole-of-government strategic approach is just too far down the priority list. There is a strong evidence that structural conflict prevention does not get the attention that might be presumed from a BSOS strategy with its three pillars. Neither the UK government nor the departments were well positioned to conduct upstream policy development. Government was focused on the tyranny of the immediate and departments were left to continue much as before. Structural changes made no difference and individual departmental priorities lay elsewhere. There were no upstream hard targets for government or departments to focus upon together.

5.3 upstream was not sufficiently well understood

Given the above, this section analyses why the resultant efforts to develop policy remained broadly normative. This section will demonstrate the lack of departmental clear thinking by drawing on several examples that highlight the shortfalls in understanding of upstream. The impact of this lack of clear thinking on conflict prevention will be addressed in the policy implementation studies and later chapters.

The policy documents that emerged between 2012–2015 should have provided departmental direction and a baseline for Parliament and the public to assess the direction of travel set by government, and provided the basis for operationalisation of the intent in relation to the BSOS upstream pillar. However, there was no effective mechanism for Parliament to understand the objectives of the policy documents, let alone measure progress. If it was difficult for Parliament to understand, then it is even more difficult for the public. Even the government international aid review had been criticised for its broad policy objectives for poverty reduction – and this was the core business of DFID. However, despite the lack of clear government direction for upstream, departments were seeking to advance the government's agenda, albeit resulting in a broadly normative policy.

To deliver good policy one must understand the ends one seeks to achieve. This then needs to be translated into the ways and means[79] by which one might best achieve those ends. This section argues that not only were the ends not articulated but that there was no common understanding of the term upstream, and hence how then to operationalise objectives was not sufficiently well understood. Certainly, there was an understanding of the individual tools (for example, Security Sector Reform (SSR)) and how to use such tools in a technical (projects) approach to statebuilding. But this is different from the more subtle use of the same tool as part of a conflict prevention agenda where there is a risk of a society breaking down in violent conflict. Such a conflict prevention agenda ideally should be jointly owned by donor and aid recipient state. Otherwise the donor must be very clear that the use of a tool is being done so with a degree of risk[80].

[78] Whether this has improved coordination for structural conflict prevention is for further research; but the indications are that it did not.

[79] Ends – the objective; ways – the types of intervention; means – the resources to achieve the interventions.

[80] For example, in 2003 in Sierra Leone as IMATT was developing a strategy to improve the accountability and effectiveness of the military (I led on this process), there was real concern that IMATT were developing a more efficient Sierra Leone military more able to instigate coups than before.

A conflict prevention agenda, between the UK government and fragile state, tends towards the need for politics to create the conditions for the technical tools of programmes and projects that can support the political aims. Hence, one might reasonably have expected policies emerging that, even if normative, would recognise the subtle overlap and difference between conflict prevention and statebuilding. However, in interviews, even DFID staff acknowledged that not enough emphasis was placed on politics which, Baroness Helić indicated, was at the centre of the conflict prevention approach. Baroness Helić commented on the need to "really think[ing] about upstream diplomacy" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1) but that clarity of thinking does not appear to have happened.

A final example comes from the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, who, when reflecting on the issue of policy development in 2017, wrote:

> As prime minister, I made sure that half Britain's aid spending went to the most fragile states.… Today, state failure is increasing – and nearly half the world's poor people will soon live in fragile states and regions. At the same time, there are huge gaps in our understanding of what makes states fragile and keeps them that way. And much of the work that has been done has yet to be translated into workable policies (Cameron, 2017, p1).

5.3.1 Strategy for strategy's sake?

The World Bank report (World Bank, 2011) (see Chapter 4) indicated the significant length of time it takes for a post-conflict developing state, like South Sudan, to develop the processes and institutions for peaceful political coexistence. Drawing on academic literature and international community reports there is evidence of the limitations of the international communities' efforts which have been more reactive to events rather than shaping and supporting a state at risk of descending into violence. The BSOS initiative for upstream was therefore an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate a different way of thinking and acting. But to do so would require clarity of thought and objectives. However, as has been argued, there was neither real clarity on upstream goals emerging from policy nor the application of the ways and means. Without clear goals it is difficult to develop good policy and strategy; hence it is unsurprising that so little emerged. However, even with clear objectives the operationalisation of conflict prevention is a challenge as seen from the academic literature in Chapter 2. This is where strategy, and being able to set out the ends, ways and means in sufficient detail for integration of efforts across a number of lines of development, is so important. But there are indications that strategy was not well developed or followed. This is exemplified by a response to an ICAI recommendation for the need for better strategy for scaling up efforts in fragile states. The ICAI had commented that:

> A 'flexible' programme can become an unstructured 'umbrella' programme, with no coherent strategy or with goals so general that it is impossible to identify impact or roll out on a wider scale (ICAI, 2015a, p9).

While not specific to conflict prevention the response to the ID Committee by DFID's Policy Director General (Nick Dyer) is interesting as it sheds light on how that department was thinking. In response, Dyer comments that DFID had a clear view of its priorities and there was a need for:

> A balance to be struck between a process like a strategy ... [as] … in my experience strategies are not read ... [and] quite often get out of date quite quickly" (ID Cttee, 2015, Para 57.40-59.00).

This comment by Dyer suggests that the role of strategy was either not widely understood, not used correctly, or political direction was so unstable as to make redundant the benefits of strategy. It is argued that strategy was indeed unstable given the length of time necessary to address an upstream conflict prevention issue. Nor is it helped by the short time ministers remain in post. However, one interviewee commented that taking a snapshot of the outcome of BSOS was perhaps the wrong way of considering its impact. It was suggested that rather than "looking at it as a stand-alone piece, there is another way of looking at it as a stepping stone to where we are now" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1). While this may be a fair comment in relation to the early warning and rapid crisis response pillars, it is not clear whether this is true of upstream. Since 2015 upstream policy has not developed any further and so unsurprisingly neither is there any evidence of strategy. Indeed, it was not uncommon when meeting interviewees to note the feeling that BSOS was the peak of efforts and the initiative has not moved any further forward. One just needs to look at the Stabilisation Unit focus since 2019. The Stabilisation Unit was singled out under the Coalition government as a key actor in the BSOS upstream pillar. But by 2019, with the publication of the Stabilisation Unit's guide to policy makers and practitioners, it is clear that it had moved away from upstream to focus on stabilisation in a narrower sense. Certainly, the BSOS had an impact and, as it remains extant in policy terms, it has contributed to the development of the UK government's approach to stabilisation in a whole-of-government approach. The joint inter-departmental analysis process (JACS) has also come in for criticism in terms of South Sudan but this was also early days for a new process that might have led in due course to better understanding and from that a clear strategy of action; but this is an issue for further research. Overall, there is no evidence that even a normative strategy of how departments might work together for upstream conflict prevention emerged.

5.3.2 Where was the politics?

If politics is the key to conflict prevention, then it is argued that there was insufficient emphasis on the political issues associated with conflict prevention. A DFID interviewee commented that in the production of *Building Peaceful States and Societies* politics was at the "core of peace within a country but we possibly did not put enough emphasis" (Interview No 25, 2019, p1) on politics. It was further commented that "we go in with a big normative agenda … with a bunch of technocratic things you could do" (Interview No 25, 2019, p1). Furthermore, a UK-based NGO interviewee, close to policy development in DFID at the time, commented that there was "a lot of use of the terminology [about] conflict prevention [but] there was not a lot of political will to actually see this strategy through in practical terms" (Interview No 5, 2017, p1). This is very much reflected in the normative policy that followed BSOS. But without real experience of conflict prevention operations there was little to base learning upon. Generally, what learning existed tended towards a technical approach with learning from the experience of programmes and projects. MOD had a more strategic lessons learnt process that looked at theatres of operation and campaigns, but this was not focused on structural conflict prevention and certainly not from the perspective of a wider analysis of problems, the politics of the situation and what could be learnt – and from that the implications for policies and subsequently practice.

This focus on projects and programmes in the outline policies very much reflects an approach articulated by one interviewee when it was stated that:

> DFID has got tens of millions, we have got to get the money out the door; looking at the politics is just too difficult. Let's just spend it because we know it will help (Interview No 25, 2019, p1).

This theme was to come up again in the policy implementation studies. Certainly, the BSOS upstream pillar emphasised working beyond government, supporting the role of women and the private sector. But in interview Mitchell was dismissive of working directly with the governments of fragile state governments due to the high risk of financial corruption (see below). This may well have had an impact on working directly with governments like that in South Sudan and perhaps Nepal and may cast light on macro policy and what was happening on the ground (see policy implementation studies in Chapters 6 and 7). However, for conflict prevention to be successful and taking account of the policy implementation studies, Chapter 8 will argue that what was required was a higher degree of political engagement in order to create the right conditions for supporting programmes and projects. The alternative was a very risky strategy and, as will be seen, in the case of South Sudan and Nepal outcomes proved to be unsustainable if at all achieved. The other option perhaps was not to attempt such programmes and projects, for either conflict prevention or statebuilding strategies, unless the risks were reduced by better bilateral political agreement and ideally joint objectives[81].

There is a reasonable argument that suggests that looking for strategies, programmes and projects is too limiting a way to consider the UK government's approach to structural conflict prevention. Maybe there needs to be more understanding of the effect of the UK government's soft powers of influence in order to understand if upstream was indeed being done better. However, examining soft power in this way requires a much higher degree of access to key stakeholders both in the UK and target country stakeholders and this has not been possible in this research. This topic needs more attention than has been possible in this research but the House of Lords did address soft power in a debate and a report (Lords, 2014). In the debate the Archbishop of Canterbury critically noted that:

> Crucially, the use of intervention through reconciliation and mediation work at the early stages of conflict were more effective than hard power.… Yet the application of this strategy in terms of developing the tools for intervention through reconciliation and mediation is still absent (Hansard, 2014c, Vol 757).

5.3.3 DFID: learning from experience did not deliver a conflict prevention policy

Parliamentary committee reports by the ID Committee tended to put DFID under the most scrutiny. Also, the ICAI conducted studies that focused on aspects of structural conflict prevention. The evidence clearly suggests that much was still being left to DFID, rather than an emerging whole-of-government approach. This is unsurprising as the bulk of the funds allocated to aid remained with DFID. However, it must be borne in mind that while getting

[81] Personal experience of working in Sierra Leone where President Kabbah was directly engaged with the PM (Blair) and SoS for ID (Short) which certainly gave the UK MOD team more authority and influence.

upstream was a pillar of Coalition government intent for fragile states it still was one amongst many objectives for aid policy. If governance was the mainstay of the DFID conflict prevention programme as commented upon in Chapter 4, then given the size and effort of the programme it was a relatively low priority; this was true of other departments too.

But, how upstream conflict prevention then developed within DFID, is important as it was the Coalition government's intent to move in that direction and arguably remains a failing aspect of engagement by the UK and the international community[82]. Overall, one could take the view that DFID's published policy was there for guidance and general information; there was little of substance and no real indications of lessons from the past which is unsurprising. Substance does not have to mean more levers, more involvement in state institutions, society or more projects. Substance could mean less levers and greater clarity on the UK's part in efforts to support the political issues associated with conflict prevention. However, DFID conflict prevention activities were still heavily focused on development as a means out of the risks of conflict. In interview Andrew Mitchell commented:

> In DFID we understood completely that it was far cheaper to prevent conflict starting and to stop it once it started let alone reconcile people afterwards is incredibly expensive. So, we always understood that the upstream was vital if we were to contain cost and contain misery and conflict. So, we were very, very strong on prevention if that is what you mean by upstream (Interview No 27, 2019, p1).

It was suggested to Mitchell that structural conflict prevention required a greater expenditure of political capital with fragile state elites, over an extended timeframe, to create and sustain the conditions for the more technical support (i.e. institutional/civil society projects/programmes) provided by departments. Mitchell commented that:

> In a fragile state, you don't tend to work with the government. You only work with governments where you absolutely trust them to behave properly which means if you give them a pound of hard-earned taxpayer's money it will be a pound that reaches the front line and in many fragile states the government and structures are not strong enough (Interview No 27, 2019, p1).

There may be good reasons for no direct funding to target state governments given the risks identified by Mitchell. However, the response is very much based on a technical approach to conflict prevention without getting to the core issue of politics and the role of elites. There is also strong evidence that there remained issues within departments about how best to execute the BSOS upstream direction[83]. Policy directors from specialist NGOs Saferworld and International Alert, both with long experience in conflict prevention activities, expressed their difficulties in influencing the direction of conflict prevention policy. One interviewee commented that after the BSOS launch "on the macro level there is a certain amount of over ambition … idealist … there was no conflict prevention policy writ large … and there was not sufficient vision in each individual place to say this adds up to something larger"

[82] Reasons for this failing will be returned to in the final chapter.
[83] See Chapter 2 and DFID's own research project that reported in 2016.

(Interview No 5, 2017, p1). But the interviewee did acknowledge that BSOS was a good start. However, it is interesting to note the comment on the lack of vision. Reviewing the DFID documentation there was neither the vision referred to by the NGO policy director, nor the real thinking about preventative diplomacy referred to by Baroness Helić. This lack of definition in policy was not confined to conflict prevention but seems to be a DFID trait in its policy documents. This is best summarised by the Africa APPG in relation to the high-level objectives for the DFID core activity for development aid. The APPG cited DFID's objective of "helping 20m people to hold authorities to account", and asked "DFID to clarify what exactly these headline figures mean, in particular the contribution that UK bilateral aid will make to them, and how this will be assessed" (Africa APPG, 2012, p 30 & 31). These types of high-level, almost meaningless, objectives were not uncommon. Again, the focus on core DFID programmes comes through from the top. In further discussion specifically focused on conflict prevention, Mitchell focused on core DFID programmes rather than on governance, institutions and justice. Using Rwanda as an example Mitchell stated that:

> … supporting education for girls, supporting development, supporting maternal health care, supporting agriculture, these are all things that help them build a more stable society (Interview No 27, 2019, p1).

5.3.4 MOD: the focus was low-level training not conflict prevention or statebuilding

It was not just DFID that was failing to communicate how upstream was to be progressed. When published, the Defence Engagement Strategy gave no indication as to where and how the policy of capacity building would be executed. As seen by the MOD annual reports to Parliament, the level of activity is relatively low level and predominantly tactical training. One senior retired officer, once heavily involved in SSR, noted that:

> The MOD is very good at designing tactical level responses because it can do that; it is very bad at investigating the institutional level of reforms necessary which it either does not want to do or does not feel that it has the capacity to do and so a lot of that is therefore outsourced to consultants (Interview No 2, 2017, p1).

The MOD does develop very comprehensive doctrine for teaching, but it is where and when it is applied that counts. The interviewee further commented that the MOD then fails to integrate consultants (often brought in under Stabilisation Unit contracts) into MOD efforts[84]. However, the MOD saw progress differently. Responding to the Defence Committee in 2014 the MOD stated that "measuring the effectiveness of international defence engagement, it is usually impossible to link progress towards UK goals to specific activities" and "the outcomes we measure are long term, and subject to buffeting by events, and … the real importance of these metrics is the change we will see in the next 5 to 10 years" (Def Cttee, 2014b, p9). Certainly, one must be careful of drawing too many conclusions on projects and programmes. The influence of Defence attachés is hard to assess as with other aspects of soft power. Interviews with two stabilisation practitioners (Interview No 21, 2019, p1, Interview No 22, 2019, p1), well connected to MOD and the Stabilisation Unit and with experience of South Sudan, commented on the influence of MOD staff on

[84] Personal experience while working for the UN in Sudan of meeting by accident UK retired military officers on contract to the Conflict Pool and having had no knowledge of their task or presence in country.

events between India and Pakistan (2019) and the influence of the ex-MOD staff working in South Sudan (2012) prior to the return to civil war. However, MOD's involvement in upstream at this time has been examined by others. Johnson (2019), commenting on the Defence Engagement Strategy and the emphasis on capacity building and influence, noted that what emerged was a "comprehensive, cross government approach" and the recognition of the various levers addressed in this thesis. Commenting on the experience of UK forces in actually implementing the strategy, Johnson notes:

> The idea that influence can occur to prevent armed conflict does not have a flawless track record. Indeed it is difficult to find evidence that upstream activities work very well, and certainly not as intended (Johnson, 2019, p162).

The research conducted in this thesis about why this happened has found that it was not that the approach was not fit for purpose, but that the approach was never fully tried and tested within a whole-of-government approach either with a cooperative, or much more difficult with an uncooperative, other party state or elites. The MOD stayed in its comfort zone of low-level tactical training.

5.3.5 FCO: austerity and the Arab Spring impacted political analysis

As for the FCO policy, again there is no clear policy or strategy. The FCO were signatories to a number of inter-departmental documents published between 2012 and 2015, albeit more normative than substantive and in some cases a reiteration of that which has already passed before. If any department might be expected to deal with the policy development from a political analysis perspective, it should have been the FCO. Austerity and civil service cuts was impacting the analysis capability of the FCO. Typical of this type of policy document was *Preventing Conflict in Fragile States* (FCO et al., 2012c), published in December 2012 – a year after BSOS. In this policy there is evidence that little had moved forward since the Security Strategy and BSOS. The document suggested that, since July 2011, the three key ministries had been working together to improve their ability to anticipate instability, to take fast action, to invest in upstream prevention and to scale up efforts to tackle violence against women – but nothing beyond that which had already been articulated. Although, it was in this latter area of violence against women and girls, and the response to UNSCR 1325 and sexual violence in conflict, that there is evidence of increased efforts. It is clear that Hague took a particular interest in this effort; but one senior politician (Interview No 3, 2017, p1), reinforced by comments from an NGO (Interview No 1, 2017, p1), perhaps cynically suggested that as violence against women was a vote winner with the public and NGOs, it was driven hard. Balanced by the comments of Baroness Helić, this is a harsh judgement as much practical good came from the initiative even if it had its limitations and failings. However, as will be seen in the South Sudan policy implementation study, the Arab Spring was drawing political staff and analytical capabilities away from other areas at the same time as the FCO was having to find savings, which could only come from human resources. One London-based interviewee sitting alongside the FCO staff and therefore well positioned to see across the departments commented:

> We did not have the primacy of the traditional FCO led analysis which would have been focused more on politics. Instead you had development actors who had a very different agenda (Interview No 10, 2017, p1).

5.3.6 Conflict Pool and Stabilisation Unit; not resourced for policy development

The Conflict Pool and Stabilisation Unit were in no position to either develop policy nor provide direction and coordination to departments; they provided capabilities that could be used to execute actions. This view emerges from a 2012 ISAI report where it was noted that the Conflict Pool "has proved effective at identifying and supporting worthwhile conflict prevention initiatives and has delivered some useful, if localised, result" (ICAI, 2012, p1). The ICAI commented that the Conflict Pool functioned well as a "responsive, grant-making instrument for supporting small-scale peacebuilding activities by local partners in conflict-affected countries" but "lacked a clear strategic framework and robust funding model" (ICAI, 2012, p1). The ICAI criticised the cumbersome management arrangements, and management by "consensus across three departments is so challenging that those charged with its management have tended to shy away from harder strategic issues" (ICAI, 2012, p1). The ICAI recommended the development of "a clearer strategic framework … to clarify its comparative advantage alongside DFID … and identify how it will integrate defence, diplomacy and development into a multidisciplinary approach to conflict prevention" (ICAI, 2012, p1). No real evidence was found to indicate that this objective was achieved during the Coalition government.

In terms of policy development the ICAI took the view that "there is no process for refining the Conflict Pool's approach to conflict prevention and comparing it with trends in international practice" (ICAI, 2012, p18), and little attention appeared to be given to programme reviews and evaluation despite funds being available within the Stabilisation Unit. It should be remembered that, at the time, the Stabilisation Unit was making a major contribution to the UK's efforts in Helmand Province and was the primary source of civilians working in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams as well as managing teams in DRC, Georgia, Iraq, Kosovo and Sudan. Policy development was not their core business. Indeed, the comments of the ICAI in their 2015 Report regarding the CSSF (which now included the Stabilisation Unit funding) as a "technical resource" seems to imply that the ICAI had also accepted that strategy development did not lie with the Conflict Pool/Stabilisation Unit.

When looking at those states that might be considered in a pre- or post-violent conflict stage, and cross-referencing this to the Stabilisation Unit's 2014/15 Business Plan (Stabilisation Unit, 2014a), one finds that the countries that might have benefited from upstream effort were, for the most part, low or medium priority states. Nepal was a low priority for the Stabilisation Unit and Sudan (not South Sudan) was a medium priority. This is also reflected in the analysis of the DFID security and justice programme in Nepal (Chapter 7) as evidenced from interviewees and DFID's own reporting which indicated that the programme would have benefitted from more specialist UK resources from the Conflict Pool. During the interviews for the Nepal policy implementation study research a well-placed Whitehall interviewee, with considerable SSR experience, commented that "I would not have wanted to manage the programme, I have considerable sympathy for the problem" that the local DFID staff were facing (Interview No 20, 2018, p1). But Nepal was just not on the Stabilisation Unit's priority list at that time.

As an afternote, it is worth recording that, by 2019 the Stabilisation Unit had launched a new framework (Stabilisation Unit, 2019) of how it was to operate that placed the Stabilisation Unit firmly in rapid crisis response and stabilisation rather than more structural, long-term conflict prevention activities.

5.3.7 After the Coalition government: full circle

Following on from the Coalition government, in 2016, DFID published *Building Stability Framework* (DFID, 2016a). Critically, DFID acknowledged that development alone is insufficient to reduce instability and violence and that different choices had to be made. It is worth noting that the 2016 DFID framework mirrors the IDPS goals developed six years earlier; the five DFID building blocks (DFID, 2016a, p1) for assisting in building stability and equivalent IDPS goals are depicted in Table 5.1 (below). Unsurprisingly, there is a sense of déjà vu and perhaps a re-invention of a wheel already built but largely ignored. It is of course possible that the 2016 framework, to an extent, reflects a changing attitude in DFID, with new senior officials, with perhaps more direct personal experience of the security-development nexus, buying-in to the ideas that were already emerging in 2010; but this requires clarification. The 2016 framework does places emphasis on putting politics first and on a UK "integrated approach to stability [that requires] … shifts in the way we currently deliver aid" (DFID, 2016a, p1). The question of course is whether this just became more re-packaged doctrine or whether it since has been translated into substantive goals with partners – but that is outside the scope of this research.

Table 5.1 – Comparison of DFID and IDPS frameworks

DFID 2016 Framework	IDPS 2010 Goals
Fair power structures	Foster inclusive political settlements
Inclusive economic development	Inclusive and sustainable livelihoods
Conflict resolution mechanisms	Peaceful resolution of conflicts
Effective and legitimate institutions	Effective and accountable government
A supportive regional environment	Foster regional stability

5.4 Conclusion

Any policy that seeks to contribute to structural conflict prevention to avert violence needs to take account of the typical cycle of political and social conflict, violent conflict and, emerging out of political settlements, a return to politics. Clearly this is not linear and there is a continuum that draws conflict prevention into the realms of development activities and, as defined by the BSOS, rapid crisis prevention and response (including stabilisation). Separating out the UK government's actions between these activities is not always useful or simple. But it has been necessary to try and understand what specific policies were more targeted towards structural conflict prevention in order to understand why policy did not develop. The start place had to be the BSOS upstream direction which led to the review of the policy areas covered in Chapter 4.

Overall, one can identify the broad levers of structural conflict prevention policy in the various documents that emerged in the period 2011–2015. These policies were building on efforts that were already developing under the previous Labour government. Certainly, there is evidence that the Coalition government accelerated the drive towards upstream. Drawing lessons from the limitations and failings in Iraq and Afghanistan, there was a generally recognised view that prevention was less costly than military intervention for a donor state. However, what is also clear from Chapter 4 and 5 is the very general, doctrinal approach to policy that arguably did little to help develop clear objectives nor how to operationalise those objectives.

One is left with three key reasons why the political intent expressed in the BSOS was not translated into a coherent departmental and inter-departmental approach. First, and most importantly, and best expressed by Baroness Helić, was that due to the Arab Spring and other events, there was insufficient political leadership effort available to take forward the government's upstream vision. Second, departments had their own responsibilities, and although there was a series of departmental and inter departmental policy publications with upstream implications, these came to nothing as upstream was not embedded in departmental thinking. Nor was a whole-of-government for upstream going to work without very clear objectives emerging from the NSC with each department's role clearly defined. What whole-of-government focus existed was directed to stabilisation in Libya. Finally, that left departments to address upstream as best they saw fit based on past experience and thinking. The MOD continued on its low-level training missions and the FCO was under significant pressure due to the Arab Spring and staff reductions due to austerity policies. Most of the effort that did take place was in DFID but very much on a technical project basis. There is evidence of officials working blind of clear political direction and a clear inter-departmental understanding of the ends, ways and means of upstream. This resulted in a bottom-up technical approach that, at best, was ad hoc and varied in execution with the country team skills available. While the threads of upstream are apparent, they are not brought together, hence the lack of overall coherence or substance in the government and inter-departmental policy development and execution planning.

After the Coalition government and the 2015 Conservative government aid review, the ID Committee were still complaining of the lack of detailed policy. The ID Committee continued with its concerns that DFID was not thinking strategically between bilateral and multilateral aid and the 2016 aid review was lacking in detail; it was unclear how DFID planned to take it forward and, once again "we are becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of emphasis on strategy within DFID" (ID Cttee, 2017, p6). Issues and criticisms in the 2010–2015 Parliament were continuing under the Conservative government. The failure of Whitehall, under the Coalition government, to translate intent into effect will be examined again in Chapters 8 and 9. However, BSOS was being referenced in business cases and by officials in country teams to justify programmes that had components of conflict prevention and the overlap with statebuilding. BSOS was the language of the time to be referenced, thus acknowledging government intent. Given that officials were seeking to advance the BSOS agenda, the next two chapters examine two policy implementation studies of what was happening on the ground in South Sudan and Nepal, albeit without real clarity emerging from Whitehall.

To conclude, even allowing for the Whitehall security and secrecy that might have surrounded Coalition government strategies and plans to influence events in fragile states, there is no evidence that objectives and policy were developing in a coherent way for upstream. Referencing the indicators in Table 3.2 and linking the indicators to the analysis in Chapter 4, there is no real evidence of incremental policy development or problems and policies coming together with a coalition of agents with new ideas as to how to do upstream better.

Chapter 6 – Policy implementation study: South Sudan

6.1 Introduction

This policy implementation study focuses on the UK government's support to conflict prevention in South Sudan. The policy implementation study sets out to address three issues: the UK government's engagement as part of an international community effort to support South Sudan; the UK government's political intent and its translation or otherwise into whole-of-government and departmental actions; and the UK government's ability to influence, assist or deliver against the broad upstream goals identified in the BSOS and the IDPS PSGs. The analysis is in four parts and covers: a short historical context; international cooperation and the UK government's part in it; the UK government's political intent and strategy; and the UK government's structural conflict prevention programmes.

For much of the detail the policy implementation study draws heavily on international reports (e.g. UN), Parliamentary reports, departmental programme reports and some academic articles. Interviews were targeted at a cross section of actors and included input from those involved from the UN/World Bank, the FCO, DFID and ex-MOD contractors. Efforts to gain direct access to local voices to comment on the UK government's efforts proved more difficult. The one organisation that did respond was the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), albeit via a long-term international advisor not a local South Sudanese. However, enough evidence was achieved to clearly demonstrate the limitations in the UK and international community's efforts – either as a statebuilding or conflict prevention agenda. Summarising the UK government's efforts, one interviewee, intimately involved in the execution of the UK government's programme in South Sudan, noted that:

> Large-scale international community provision of technical advice and assistance was not backed by sufficient political engagement by the international community, Troika, AU or bilateral partners, allowing the Juba Government to ignore its responsibilities towards the population and failing to prevent the rapid decline into civil war (Interview No 24, 2019, p1).

With Whitehall policy for upstream not maturing in a way that could be operationalised, much of what was happening was being driven bottom up from the UK government country teams (FCO, DFID and MOD). To examine what was happening, the chapter returns to the government's BSOS upstream themes identified in Chapter 3 (Table 3.1)[85]. These themes guided the analysis of the policy implementation study; however, as identified in Chapter 1 and 2, there is the issue of the relationship between efforts to support structural conflict prevention and efforts towards statebuilding. To what extent were the efforts of UK politicians and officials, supported by other agents, and working with local elites, officials and wider society, aiming at a statebuilding agenda and/or a structural conflict prevention agenda? This thesis argues that the distinction did matter, and although the difference is subtle at the point of delivery of a programme or projects, the whole context and way the programme and project is conceived and executed could result in a very different outcome. This difference was an issue for the IMATT Sierra Leone team (link to Chapter 5.3) who were concerned that their institutional and governance efforts to reform the Sierra

[85] Themes: political intent; some broad "upstream" objectives relating specifically to institutions and governance; partnerships; and a whole-of-government approach from the UK government departments.

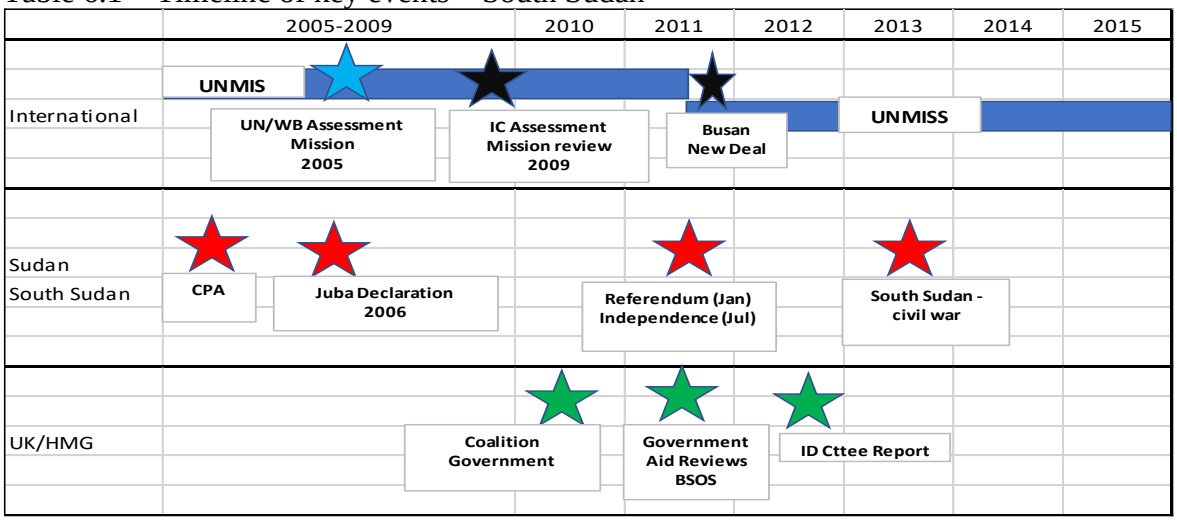
Leone armed forces could produce a better organisation to execute future coups. Hence, a key factor in the analysis of this policy implementation study, and the Nepal policy implementation study, is the UK government's political intent and how it was addressed locally and how that intent shaped and impacted what UK officials (and their agents) were doing on the ground.

6.2 Context

This section sets out the background to the policy implementation study of the UK's involvement in South Sudan in the lead up to independence and during the period of the Coalition government. The leading role the UK had in the emergence of South Sudan, along with others, provides an opportunity to analyse how the UK executed its structural conflict prevention policy with an emerging nation. This policy implementation study offers an opportunity to examine how the UK government, the FCO, DFID and MOD (and other departments) acted and how the UK's efforts were coordinated and blended with the efforts of other states and organisations (e.g. EU, UN, Norway, USA and China). Specifically, the policy implementation study sets out to examine how political intent for upstream action manifested itself in the UK's support to South Sudan.

Up until 1946 Sudan had been administered in the North by Egypt and in the South by Britain. In 1946 the areas were merged, and they became an independent nation in 1956. However, in 1953 civil war had already broken out between the north and south; the issues were representation and autonomy and was to last until 1973. With issues unresolved despite a peace agreement, a second civil war erupted in 1983 and was to last until the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). In the period from independence to the CPA in the order of 2.5 million people were killed or died of disease caused by the conflict. The conduct of the war is not addressed in this thesis, but the civil wars did provide a focus for southern unity against a common enemy, a focus that was to be lost after independence (Prendergast and Mozersky, 2004, International Crisis Group, 2006, Lunn and Thompson, 2012, de Waal, 2014, Johnson, 2014, Giffen, 2016, Johnson, 2017). A timeline of key events after the CPA is at Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 – Timeline of key events – South Sudan



The peace agreement was brokered through the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organisation focused on development and regional

cooperation; peace, security and conflict prevention were added in 1996. IGAD remains engaged in seeking a peaceful outcome to the South Sudan civil war that erupted in 2013 and effectively halted donor-supported statebuilding activities. Supporting the process, the UK became part of the Troika of nations with the USA and Norway (all co-guarantors of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement) who have, at times, acted together with the UN and World Bank to continue the peace process (Rolandsen, 2011).

The signing of the CPA marked a new stage in the relationship between the north and south. The key tenets of the CPA set out: agreements on broad principles of government and governance; power sharing; wealth sharing; protocols on the resolution of the conflict in several areas (e.g. oil-rich Abyei); and an agreement on security arrangements. The CPA provided for a six-year interim period of an autonomous southern government, followed by a self-determination referendum for the south. From the outset the CPA showed signs of strain as it "lacked broader support" (International Crisis Group, 2006, p i) within Sudan/South Sudan beyond the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA/M) and National Congress Party (NCP) – the signatories. Commenting that the international community "has remained largely silent" and "heavy on monitoring but weak on follow-through", the International Crisis Group took the view that:

> … the international community – particularly the key countries involved in the negotiation of the CPA – [did not embrace] its role as a guarantor of the CPA, and continues to lack a consistent, coordinated approach to dealing with the parties" (International Crisis Group, 2006, p ii).

But the CPA was not an all-inclusive peace agreement; the CPA was only an agreement between the SPLA and the Government of Sudan (GoS). The specific exclusion of the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) from the CPA left a major actor in the south marginalised. This led to another important agreement that has received much less attention; the *2006 Juba Declaration* between the SPLA and SSDF. These were two rival armies in the fight for independence from Sudan (Kiir and Matip, 2006). The SSDF, the larger of the two main forces in the South, has its roots in the fight for independence, but since the 1990s had been funded by the Government of Sudan and had been seen by the UK and US as a proxy army of the Government of Sudan (Young, 2003, Young, 2006). But, the SSDF also had support across south Sudan and "especially among communities that had experienced SPLA perdition during the war" (Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, p3). Indeed, the "Dinka dominated" (Young, 2003, p 425) SPLA, had a reputation for being "ill-disciplined, and its practice of living off the land caused resentment in areas it occupied" (Young, 2003, p 430). The Juba Declaration sought to bring unity and integration to the two armies. But this was to break down in 2013 with the outbreak of civil war in the South.

Studies on South Sudan (Young, 2006, Gissel, 2017, Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, de Waal, 2014) help to bring clarity to the underlying problems that existed in South Sudan but which were broadly ignored by the international community. The references tell a story of a peace agreement between the factions that was hastily negotiated, without any international support, but it did initially avert armed conflict between the SPLA and the SSDF. Furthermore, the Stabilisation Unit study notes that the combination of the CPA and Juba Declaration resulted in a reduction in violence and a general cessation of hostilities between the three major warring factions, a truce that was to hold broadly until South Sudan gained its independence in 2011.

The Stabilisation Unit study also noted that the international community missed opportunities to support longer-term peace by: focusing almost solely on the CPA; failing to focus on the political realities in the south, including the unfair 2010 elections and growing elite kleptocracy of the oil revenue; and doing little to support a second peace agreement, the Juba Declaration, albeit an "elite bargain secured through the division of oil revenues" (Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, p4). In retrospect, the Stabilisation Unit case study suggests that the flawed CPA "empowered the Troika and regional actors to confer power on the SPLA to govern South Sudan" (Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, p4), removing power from the citizenry to determine the legitimacy of the power that would govern them. In supporting the negotiations between the SPLA and Government of Sudan (GOS) to achieve the CPA, the Troika "understood the war as being primarily between the SPLA and GoS and perceived the SSDF only as a proxy force for GoS" (Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, p11) which fundamentally misunderstood the SSDF as a southern force with its own constituency in the south. Certainly, the international community was engaged in peacebuilding and US pressure on GOS was essential during the implementation stage of the CPA. Also, there had been a UN/WB Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) in 2005 to identify a "Framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication" (Joint Assessment Mission, 2005, p1). As early as 2004 international partners were coordinating their efforts in anticipation of the CPA.

As planned, the referendum was held in January 2011, but significant pressure had to be brought to bear for this to happen; there were those in the international community (UN, and western nations) who wanted the process delayed (see below). The results were published in the February and independence came five months later in July 2011. But, in the south, tensions between political parties and SPLA/other militias were soon evident and were being reported by the Secretary General to the Security Council. Also, at this time and somewhat late in the day, the UN Secretary General was reporting that the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) "in collaboration with UNDP and other development partners, had commenced the process of drafting the Southern Sudan development plan" (Sec Gen UN, 2011, p15).

Somewhat belatedly in 2011, the UN established a new mission focused on the stabilisation of South Sudan; it required GOSS initiation and request for assistance which was not available prior to independence. But, even as the mission was building up its capabilities, the mission was finding that it was more focused on protection than on peacebuilding and statebuilding. However, as one examines the international reports and timelines, one is constantly struck by the continuing focus on the North-South issues. Notwithstanding the 2005 JAM assessment, the pace of structural and institutional planning post-CPA was woefully slow. The North-South (and Darfur) issues appeared to be taking so much of the effort that little real consideration seemed to be given to what was happening within the South and what would be needed for a federal or independent state (Sec Gen UN, 2011).

Given the above, there is evidence that the efforts of the international community, and the political intent of the UK Coalition government to move upstream, to support a peaceful political transition in South Sudan was not successful. It is in this context that there is merit in examining further the UK government's involvement in the period 2010–2015 to inform

the wider debate on the strength and limitations of the UK government's approach in structural conflict prevention at that time.

6.3 International cooperation for peacebuilding and statebuilding

The BSOS is quite clear that the UK does not act alone but as part of a formal or informal coalition of states and organisations. This section places the UK government's efforts within a wider context of support to South Sudan; it identifies some of the key reasons why the UK government, and the international community coalition, was poorly positioned to undertake effective structural conflict prevention activities in South Sudan after the referendum. Internal divisions within the elites of the South had not been addressed by the international community. However, it is arguable whether the international community had the interest to address the political conditions of the south in order to create the conditions for internal peacebuilding and statebuilding as prerequisites for wider long-term conflict prevention within the south.

6.3.1 Impact of the CPA on the international community

In 2010, throughout the Secretary General's reports to the UN there is little clarity on the impending political and institutional issues that would be faced by South Sudan after the referendum (be it a federal state or independent). On the face of it, the international community, together with the governments of north and south, seemed to have a framework for operating and developing the South in the aftermath of the war. The UN/WB JAM had resulted in the *Framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication* (Joint Assessment Mission, 2005) but to questionable effect. Bennett et al.[86] conducted a review on behalf of the international community in 2009/10 (Bennett et al., 2010) and found significant shortfalls. In interview Bennett comments that despite the identification of the fault lines, which he was briefing across US and European capitals, "it made not a ha'p'oth of difference because it was a consensus amongst the donors that nothing must disturb this drive towards the [CPA] peace agreement" (Interview No 7, 2017, p1). In 2010 Bennett et al. reported that "in many respects problems identified in 2005 are still present … youth alienation and specific tensions around water and land have been exacerbated by poor progress over reintegration of demobilised soldiers and the enormous return of populations from Khartoum and abroad since 2005" (Bennett et al., 2010, p xiv). Another report, produced for USAID in 2010, adds weight and argues that the international community, and Government of South Sudan (GOSS), were poorly prepared for what was to come in South Sudan. Hinsz, the lead author of the USAID report, commented that there was "no capacity building vision and strategy" (Hinsz, 2010, p6), that the leaders (of GOSS) were still trying to balance a wide variety of interests from appeasing political and military rivals to balancing tribal representation and that the international community would find it difficult to operate without understanding "the underlying rules of the game" (Hinsz, 2010, p6).

By 2010, and the lead-up to the referendum, the IC were already having doubts about the future. Bennett commented that "by the time it got to the referendum there were some serious doubts from donors over what they were dealing with but by then the money had been spent, or allocated to the South, that juggernaut of aid was half way down the road" (Interview No 7, 2017, p1). Arrangements for the referendum in January 2011 were well

[86] Bennett was a member of the original 2005 UN/WB assessment mission.

advanced. Reporting to the Security Council, the Secretary General noted that the parties to the CPA "have made little concrete progress in establishing arrangements that would be required no matter the outcome of the referendum" (Sec Gen UN, 2010, p 5). The Secretary General wrote in April 2010, that "efforts to build rapidly the capacity of the Government of Southern Sudan to execute core governance functions need to be accelerated" (Sec Gen UN, 2010, p 20); this was five years after the CPA in one of the most underdeveloped regions of Africa.

6.3.2 International peacebuilding and statebuilding

Alex De Waal, a long-term observer and commentator on Sudan, sums up the situation in 2010 when he comments that "efforts of national technocrats and foreign donors produced bubbles of institutional integrity but the system as a whole was entirely resistant to reform" (de Waal, 2014, p347). This statement gives a strong indication that the donor agenda was firmly based on statebuilding. At the heart of de Waal's analysis, and fundamental to what the UK might have been able to achieve as part of an international community effort, were four issues: " a kleptocratic leadership that stole funds at every opportunity"; the militarised nature of South Sudan and the use of force "as an instrument of bargaining"; "government transactions [were] highly monetized, and the cashflow to the ruler is the heartbeat of governance"; and high turbulence where "patron-client relations are not stable but constantly subject to renegotiation" (de Waal, 2014, p349). De Waal comments that:

> International partners erroneously assumed that either a nascent institutional, rule-governed system existed, or that South Sudanese leaders were genuinely seeking to establish such a system, and that corruption and rent seeking were deviations from this system. This is no longer possible to believe. Good faith efforts to build institutional integrity were routinely suborned toward factional advantage and private gain. Security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration failed utterly (de Waal, 2014, p367).

Professor Francis, writing in 2015, comments that the South Sudan Troika had become the focal point for the mobilisation of international support for nation building and post-war peacebuilding. He comments that the "international community presented an "overtly optimistic approach to nation building in post-independent South Sudan" with only six years (2005–2011) for South Sudan to establish the foundations of a state after the devastation of the civil war (Francis, 2016, p4). Francis suggests that "it is inconceivable to expect that within six years, South Sudan would even begin to establish the foundation for a viable modern state, something that most post-independent states in Africa are still grappling with fifty to sixty years after political independence" (Francis, 2016, p4). Francis took the view that the international community was not "naïve to assume that six years" was enough but that:

> … the international community's involvement in promoting the breakup of Sudan and propping up post-independence nation building interventions in South Sudan, framed by the liberal peacebuilding project, have been based on short-term, quick-fix, and exit strategy orientation (Francis, 2016, p4).

Furthermore, Francis suggests that:

> It is therefore not surprising that the six-year timeframe to 'build' the structures and foundation for a new state was very much an exit strategy for the main external backers of political independence in South Sudan to triumphantly state: 'mission accomplished'. Henceforth, the backers of independence in South Sudan will be absolved from all blame if the South Sudanese new ruling and governing elites make a mess of the new state they have produced for them (Francis, 2016, p4).

Clearly, and notwithstanding the JAM assessment, and international community engagement since 2005, the pace of structural and institutional planning post-CPA was woefully slow. The North-South (and Darfur) issues appeared to be taking so much of the effort that little real consideration seemed to be given to what was happening within the South nor what would be needed for a federal or independent state. Indeed, there are those who argue that the international community's response to post-CPA, and post-independence peacebuilding and statebuilding, with specific emphasis on assisting South Sudan prepare for its future, was marked more by a failure to engage not a failure to understand the potential for a failed state from the outset. Francis argues that "within a context of the independence euphoria and optimism about the future of South Sudan, developing a coherent and coordinated programme for post-liberation peacebuilding and nation-building was hardly at the top of the agenda of the international community" (Francis, 2016, p286). Why the international community responded so poorly, and whether the international community and the UK government were well positioned by 2010 to engage with SPLM/SPLA/GOSS to influence events on the ground, for whatever reason, is addressed in the next section. But it is questionable as to whether the international community even had an interest to attempt to rapidly scale up peacebuilding and statebuilding activities. However, nor was the Southern elite interested in progressing institution building prior to independence. As will be seen, the efforts of the UK government were slow to the point of arguably being ineffective before the South descended into civil war in 2013. However, what is also clear is that any conflict prevention agenda was focused on North-South issues and no attention was being given to the risk of conflict within the South.

6.4 The UK government's political intent, strategy and whole-of-government approach

This section sets out the failure of the Coalition government, and the previous Labour government, to act strategically in relation to South Sudan. The focus is on South Sudan's emergence as an independent state in 2011 and covers the involvement of senior UK officials and assesses the reasons for their waning interest in South Sudan; there is a strong suggestion of a lack of real political interest due to higher priority issues. Hence, a key indicator of the potential for upstream policy development was missing. Linking to Table 3.2, and in the absence of incremental policy development, there are also gaps in indicators for politics driving policy development. There was a rapidly closing window of opportunity for the UK Coalition government to make any real impact in South Sudan using diplomatic and development means. But, even if the window of opportunity had remained open, there are neither sufficient indications of political intent nor upstream policies coming forward from experts (academic or official), ready for the development of a coherent upstream conflict prevention strategy with local elites to sit alongside statebuilding and development strategies.

6.4.1 Political intent

The BSOS places emphasises on institutions, civil society (and oppositions), working within existing democratic elements no matter how weak, and a functioning security and justice systems (lessons from Afghanistan, Iraq and Sierra Leone). While there were peace agreements in place (the CPA and Juba Declaration), the conditions for peace in the South were far from present. Certainly, the UK government was behind the CPA; however, the issues that brought about the Juba Declaration between the SPLA and SSDF appeared not to have made any impact on senior UK officials. It raises questions as to whether this was a lack of interest, understanding or priorities.

While there is evidence of statebuilding activities, there was no development of an explicit upstream policy, let alone conflict prevention objectives across Whitehall for South Sudan[87]. Hence, to assess political intent with regards to how the UK government intended to support structural conflict prevention and statebuilding in South Sudan one must look elsewhere for indicators. A review of the statements to Parliament by Hague and Mitchell give a flavour of the level of interest in Sudan, particularly South Sudan. Reviewing Hansard for the interventions by Hague and Mitchell in 2010 and 2011, Sudan was mentioned 51 and 95 times respectively; this fell to just 12 mentions in 2012 and thereafter hardly any mention at all. While Hague and Mitchell initially seem to bring focus to the South, this soon waned with more interest being focused on the CPA, Darfur and the international terrorist threat based in Sudan.

On the face of it the UK government appeared to be committed for the long run. However, after the referendum, Michael Ryder, the FCO Special Representative for South Sudan, suggested that the "South was on a roll. They had always benefited, at least in the United States, from a relatively undiscriminating support", albeit not amongst US officials but:

> There had always been a desire on the part of the international community to see southern independence as the end of the story, the solution to a problem, and job done; move on. It was quite clear that was not the case (Interview No 9, 2017, p1);
>
> and
>
> … it was well known that the internal tensions in South Sudan had really only been held in check, as far as they had, by the advantage of the common enemy (Interview No 9, 2017, p1).

The UK government had expected to be dealing with a government in the South with its own funds. There was already concern emerging about the level of corruption, and the decision by the GOSS to turn off the oil in January 2012, as a response to a failed negotiation with the North over revenue allocation, was seen as wholly irrational. Ryder stated that this decision by GOSS "had repercussions that I don't think they could ever had anticipated" (Interview No 9, 2017, p1). The development community were working on plans for the South, but these were predicated on having a government partner with its own money to

[87] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of Incremental No 3; PPP Nos 1, 3.

spend. That was no longer the case. So, the nature of the programmes that DFID and others were going to be able to implement changed overnight; much of that was put on hold. Ryder commented that the bulk of the deferred programmes probably never happened, the situation worsened and "humanitarian assistance was the absolute limit of what could be done there.… The plan had been to transition fairly quickly away from humanitarian assistance and into long-term development, and that changed entirely as a consequence of the South's decision to turn the oil off" (Interview No 9, 2017, p1). But note that the emphasis was on development and not the underlying tensions – the politics of the South[88]. One contact, with long-term close links to organisations in South Sudan, was highly critical of the international community in general; his view was that other than the US and Norway, donor nations had failed to establish relationships in the South. He commented that:

> There was a feeling that the problem was the North and once that problem went away everything would be fine, and pretty total ignorance of the internal southern dynamics. To be fair, many South Sudanese also felt that once the North went away the problems would be solved, but at least they were aware of the internal southern dynamics even if they were not very realistic nor proactive about the prospects of resolving them (Interview No 12, 2018, p1).

6.4.2 The UK's lack of strategic approach

Fundamentally, neither the international community nor the UK government as a major donor state had a clear strategy for supporting the emergence of the south as an independent (or federal) state[89]. Work had been going on in South Sudan under the previous Labour government since the CPA in 2005. Prior to 2010, and unlike the DFID's 2007 evaluation of its activities in Nepal (see Chapter 7) from which one can identify how the strategy evolved, no equivalent document has been sourced for Sudan/South Sudan. Hence, it has not been possible to track the evolution of the UK government's approach as the situation evolved in Sudan/South Sudan. Nor is the DFID Development Tracker particularly helpful in assessing the UK government's approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding.

An interviewee, who saw the situation at the time from the MOD and was later closely involved in the development of the South Sudan SSR programme, commented on the situation in 2008. He noted that "in London there was nobody to really run this programme"; the FCO was just starting to get involved in running programmes, the MOD was completely focused on Afghanistan and Iraq and was uninterested, and so:

> … basically, FCO and MOD ganged up on DFID and made them take this [SSR] programme on – a non-ODA programme, a military programme and a military who were at best controversial, who had a whole humanitarian risk element to them and DFID was very unhappy with this. So the programme had to get on and run itself (Interview No 24, 2019, p1)[90].

The early SSR programme had sought to address a national security concept and establish a national MOD, thus converting the SPLA from a guerrilla army into a proper accountable

[88] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of PPP No 3.
[89] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of Incremental No 3 and PPP No 3.
[90] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of Incremental No 3.

military force. This task came from the CPA and there was a division of responsibility between the UK and the US; the Americans were to focus on operations and the UK on structures and administration. However, it was commented that the SPLA were firmly against a MOD and just wanted an operational headquarters[91]. For the government and the SPLA, "transformation from a guerrilla army into a national army was the main objective" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1), and "Salva Kia, he was a bit more ambivalent as he wanted to bring into the army all these disparate guerrilla groups and so he was concerned for transformation into a regular army" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1). But one gets the impression that the UK had identified its contributing effort, which was conceived in London and left to ex-military contractors to fulfil. This type of programme had been done elsewhere, so it was building on an incremental approach to policy based on programmes in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Sudan/Darfur[92]. So, there was experience and lessons of how to do this. There was a clearly defined task that was the subject of a contract, whether the task was appropriate given the circumstances or not. However, given the tensions locally, it was questionable whether conditions were right for an organisational and process programme.

The work of the ID Committee also provides some background. Responding to an ID Committee report in 2012, the government comments that "capacity building has been a cornerstone of UK programming in South Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement" (ID Cttee, 2012b, p 9); but this view is challenged. Neither the 2011 House of Lords EU Committee on Sudan (House of Lords, 2011) nor the ID Committee in their report on Sudan paid much attention to the drivers of conflict in South Sudan despite local violence already being a major issue. Certainly, the fragility of the South was recognised but the threat of disintegration was not examined in any detail. Giving evidence to the House of Lords Committee, one witness, John Middleton from Chatham House, told the Lords committee that "South Sudan was not destined to be a failed state but it faces 'massive problems'" (House of Lords, 2011a, p15); this is a reflection of what was considered informed analysis at the time. With this level of informed evidence to Parliament perhaps it is unsurprising that there was no clear strategy or pressure for a strategy. But a senior politician close to the issue of South Sudan argued that the UK government did have a strategy relating to stabilisation; it was very much "linked to economic progress" (Interview No 13, 2018, p1). This is borne out by the comments to the House of Lords Committee when Sir Henry Bellingham noted that South Sudan could either succeed or fail and the "biggest threat is the South moving forward without resolving the outstanding issues with the North"; furthermore he commented that "I think the key to South Sudan is actually building that economic sustainability and then getting the growth that we have seen in other countries" (House of Lords, 2011b, p38).

The UK government was driving ahead with its templated[93] view of the requirement. In late 2011, Mitchell had committed the UK to partnering with South Sudan to pilot the implementation of the IDPS peacebuilding and statebuilding goals as part of the New Deal (see below). A senior interviewee, embedded in the new Juba embassy, noted that under Alistair MacPhail, the newly appointed ambassador in Juba, there was a coherent embassy approach emerging. The aim was to develop a response to the security needs from strategic to tactical levels (local sub-state) that included

[91] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 4.
[92] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 4.
[93] Off-the-shelf programmes and projects often designed from lessons from previous experience; see section 8.4.1 (p 147) for further explanation of "templated".

institutions, legislation and practical local security needs with roles for the FCO, DFID and MOD. As the concept and plan was beginning to emerge, he commented that:

> DFID London were very unhappy about this programme and wanted to close it because they were concerned about: continuing fighting between rebels and SPLA in Jonglei and places like that; fighting on the border and humanitarian atrocities which were being committed in varying degrees of authenticity. And they made a real push to close it. FCO now, with equities invested and an ambassador engaged were going to fight tooth and nail to make it survive. MOD, now with a defence attaché, and intelligence streaming back from what was going on, and looking at coming out of Afghanistan, already out of Iraq, beginning to think about UN engagement (Interview No 24, 2019, p1)[94].

However, the interviewee recalled that in 2012 the austerity cuts removed the expertise from the FCO Africa team and "suddenly [you] had a drop in understanding and appreciation of what was going on" and there was "a massive dropping off in direction from London, not that there had been much; that meant that Alistair McPhail was by himself" (Interview No 24, 2019). The interviewee noted that at the time the international community was still delivering all the services that should have been provided by government. The focus was on "technical advice and technical assistance. By independence and by 2012, political influence was too late. So, the whole thing was unbalanced" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1). Notwithstanding the significant technical assistance, it was further commented that:

> Neither the international community nor the Troika or anybody else [was] influencing the political side to move Salva Kia and Mashawa onto a more positive, less rentier approach. That is the number one lesson out of South Sudan and a big lesson for BSOS. So when the conflict came, the pundits saw it coming but neither UK government, nor the embassy, nor the Americans, nor the UN, nor anybody else was prepared to accept that this was going to happen – and it did (Interview No 24, 2019, p1).

This view is further supported by both Bennett and Francis who also commented that the UK government, along with the international community, was doing too little, too late. Bennett remarked that:

> … too little attention [was] given to peace building in the true sense of it,… insufficient real attention was given to the conflict dynamics in South Sudan and the exclusion of those people such as the Nuer.… Which meant that sooner or later it was going to break which it did shortly after the declaration of independence … the big money was now a drip … now South Sudan was back to what it was before … a rogue state with not very much money (Interview No 7, 2017, p1)[95].

The views of the interviewee embedded in the new South Sudan embassy reinforce the strategic FCO/Whitehall view given by Ryder. There was a failure across the board by the international community to create the conditions for effective peacebuilding and

[94] Table 3.2 Indicators – PPP No 3.
[95] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of PP Nos 3, 5, 6.

statebuilding efforts with the South Sudan elite. One also detects evidence of frustration in the UK government from working with GOSS/SPLM. In some respects, it is surprising that Mitchell had signed up to the UK partnering with South Sudan as part of the New Deal. The UK's links with South Sudan appear not as deep as the UK government liked to make out and it was clearly a challenging environment for a new approach. Also, it is arguable whether South Sudan was the obvious place to pilot a new approach given the difficulties, lack of relationships and high risk of failure. In interview a senior UK politician, engaged with South Sudan, acknowledged that at the time of independence there was a:

> … naïve hope that with all the international attention that they would make the thing work … easy to be wise after the event … we were prepared for the new state and threw a huge amount of money and effort and resources at it (Interview No 13, 2018, p1).

A retrospective view of the scale of the UK's strategic failure comes across in a presentation to the IISS in 2014 on *Delivering an Integrated Approach*. Mark White, Deputy Head of the Stabilisation Unit, stated that "despite the improvement in strategy and analysis the majority of delivery in fragile and conflict affected states is decided upon and delivered departmentally rather than jointly" (White, 2014, p1). These were not encouraging comments some three years after the launch of BSOS. White went on to comment on the UK government's efforts in South Sudan. White states that the dangers of the departmental approach:

> … is the potential for "group think" within individual departments. People want a certain thing to happen so therefore they assume that it will and the risk for opportunities for synergy between defence, development and diplomatic activities get missed through the focus of one's own business and the lack of awareness of the activities of others (White, 2014, p1)[96].

One sees evidence of Whitehall templating statebuilding lessons learnt from elsewhere. When questioned on upstream, White commented that fragile states that are in an apparently stable state tend to lose attention. This becomes a problem, White commented, as the UK government was not integrating lessons fast enough and problems had to be dealt with from scratch as they arose. White further commented that:

> A particularly pertinent example for me was what happened in South Sudan where it was pretty clear that the country was degenerating into a very fragile situation. There was, not just from the UK, but the wider international community, quite a lot of resistance to accepting the reality of what was happening and quite a lot of insistence in continuing to adopt the various different strategies that had been pursued. The problem comes when the crisis hits it is much harder to bring everything together if it has been operationally siloed (White, 2014, p1).

White was using lessons from South Sudan to make a more general point that UK governments (past and present) had failed to engage strategically in South Sudan earlier enough to begin to make a difference. MacPhail's efforts to establish a coherent approach

[96] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental Nos 2, 4, 7.

to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and statebuilding in South Sudan, albeit somewhat belatedly, did not have enough support from Whitehall. However, it must be remembered that developing an upstream or statebuilding strategy and conducting subsequent activities is reliant on having a local partner that is mindful to act in a way that accords with the direction that the UK was seeking to travel. In this respect, optimism seems to have over-shadowed the risks. Given this sense of optimism in UK official circles, and the absence of an in-depth analysis of drivers for change in South Sudan, it is unsurprising that the UK did not pick up on the seriousness of the risks of state failure and civil war and shape their approach accordingly. Hence, it is unsurprising that there are no signs of the indicators (Table 3.2) of either a policy or strategy even beginning to emerge in Whitehall.

6.4.3 A country-level view

At an international and local level relationships between the SPLM/SPLA and the international community were not good. Ryder, comments that:

> … by the early part of 2012, there was a real sense of despair on the part of the international community.… what on earth could you do? It wasn't the sort of place you could go in and do stuff ourselves, and the Government in Juba seemed impervious to any form of rational persuasion (Interview No 9, 2017, p1).

But Bennett puts the lack of ability to work with the SPLM/SPLA down to a more fundamental issue – relationships built up over time. Bennett was critical of the UK government, and other international community stakeholders, of being too Khartoum based; but one must also remember the international community's focus was on the wider issues of Darfur (and terrorism). However, it is not surprising that Bennett comments that:

> … the best people on the ground, who had influence on the ground, were the Americans.… For the simple reason that the Americans insisted that the minimum amount of time that any one individual was to stay in South Sudan was three years … this is why the Americans had a greater amount of influence than anybody else, it was not just money, it was also time spent" (Interview No 7, 2017, p1).

This view is further reinforced by another interviewee with involvement with the MOD Africa policy team during the Coalition government who subsequently was involved in UK programmes in Juba. It was suggested that the British embassy in Khartoum was uninterested in what was happening in Juba and that:

> … staff vary rarely came down, [and] if they did come down it was to tell us what to do. They did not like the operation, they did not like the DFID office there. They did not want a new embassy in Juba.… So you had poor relations between Juba [GOSS] not surprisingly and a very Khartoum-focused set of officials" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1).

For Pepera, DFID Head in Khartoum, there was a more strategic issue: the lack of an effective African interlocutor focused on South Sudan as an emerging state. While Thabo Mbeki was involved in the North-South negotiations, there was no major statesman focusing

on the GOSS. Indeed, Ryder comments that Thabo Mbeki was "utterly disillusioned" with the SPLM and Mbeki had said to Ryder that:

> "there isn't a movement" … he meant there wasn't even a coherent liberation movement.… He said, "there is no coherent political objective, there is no discipline" and he was deeply disappointed.… Here was the potential for a new black African state to have a really good start and this … rabble ruined it" (Interview No 9, 2017, p1).

One sees evidence of not only some degree of failure of the African Union to create the conditions for the international community but also evidence of frustration that the UK government officials felt when working with the GOSS/SPLM. However, the internal issues in southern Sudan, which were the subject of the 2006 Juba Declaration, were never mentioned in interview; nor was the Juba Declaration itself. With a Khartoum-centric UK team prior to McPhail, one gets the impression that, other than the US and Norway, donor nations had failed to establish relationships in the South. The development community had expected to work with a cooperative development partner with funds and this did not happen. However overall, there is evidence of failure by the international community to understand the internal dynamics and hence attempts to influence the leadership were ineffective. Also, a view was expressed that the international community concentrated on the institutions of state at the national level without sufficient attention to the local level. An INGO interviewee, who had long worked with a South Sudan civil society organisation, noted that:

> "central government has meant very little to most of the people", and whether British or Egyptian or Khartoum or Juba, "it is seen as alien, foreign, irrelevant, opaque, unknown. Nobody sees themselves as having any ownership or way of influencing it. Their only real interaction with it is when it sends soldiers or tax collectors, neither of which are positive experiences", but "at the same time, it is the main employer and source of cash and advancement, and it is often viewed in this light rather than as government per se" (Interview No 12, 2018, p1).

Furthermore, and linked to DFID's own 2016 Rapid Evidence Assessment, comments were made on the importance of the local and that:

> … local governance, whether through traditional chiefs and elders, or through a government appointed local administrator (who himself is under-resourced and has very little influence with his masters in central government), is what effects most of the population, with the exception of the urban elite in the national capital and to a lesser extent in a handful of major towns (Interview No 12, 2018, p1).

The interviewee commented on meeting a UK ambassador and being particularly critical of the UK's focus on national-level institution building[97]. But there was also evidence that this interviewee felt that the international community was never really onboard for an independent South Sudan; a view also taken by Bennett. This interviewee noted that the perception was that the international community (including US and UK officials) wanted

[97] The UK had been supporting police development in the states with some success and McPhail's team did seek to bring this into a more strategic approach before the civil war and work effectively stopped.

and expected unity at the referendum. Certainly, the AU has always been ambiguous about boundary changes due to the potential issues associated with colonial boundaries. It is this position, towards the referendum outcome, that was attributed to the international community being "singularly unprepared for independence when it happened" (Interview No 12, 2018). However, it is arguable whether the UK government was taken by surprise to the extent described in some interviews. There is the alternative view that the issue was just not of sufficient importance to the UK government. Certainly, the lack of understanding by officials, particularly after the civil service austerity draw down, would have contributed to Whitehall and embassy awareness but there are enough indications that the warnings were inconvenient and ignored. As early as his involvement in the CPA discussions and signing in 2005, Hilary Benn suggested that:

> It was always pretty clear that South Sudan would vote for independence when the chance came, only for the new country to descend into a conflict between two leaders each of whom thought they should be in charge (Interview No 23, 2019, p1).

6.5 The UK government's statebuilding/structural conflict prevention efforts

This section provides an overview of the actions of the international community and the UK government with specific regards to those that can, in some way, be attributed to structural conflict prevention. The section draws on interviews, Hansard, departmental programme reports and academic studies. It was apparent that no effective road map emerged after the CPS; but it has been suggested that the South Sudan elite were also not interested. Compounding the problems, the UN mission and the international community failed to implement effective protection strategies; but this is unsurprising given the small size of the mission and, as usual, the slow build-up of the UN mission. The UK government, along with the US, did attempt SSR of the military. While this effort seems to have had more to do with statebuilding than driven by a desire to assist in conflict prevention, had it been successful then it would have contributed to a reduction in tensions between armed factions. However, despite the programme having some limited success, the programme was not sustainable as deep-rooted tensions among elites remained which were to come to the fore in the 2013 civil war.

6.5.1 The international community: slow to get going

Notwithstanding the efforts of the international community after the 2005 CPA, and the high-level framework that emerged out of the JAM, it is difficult to identify any road map for South Sudan. In fact, in 2010 the UN Secretary General was still talking about the intent to develop, in partnership GOSS and in consultation with the WB and other stakeholders, a capacity-building plan. Ryder comments that, coming into his role in the FCO in 2010, he found it odd when he took up his appointment that "there had been no international framework there to sort of put arms round"; but, also he commented that "the parties didn't want it" referring to the elites in south Sudan (Interview No 9, 2017, p1).

Ryder and his Norwegian colleague urged the US to take a lead on a "framework post-independence. But, although they saw the point, they weren't interested.… The parties were left to their own devices, with the African Union" (Interview No 9, 2017, p1). The view was to let the AU lead. It was well understood that the AU lacked capability itself. The UK and

others were content to provide the AU with support and do work for it but remain at a distance from the main problem. Giving evidence to the House of Lords Committee on the EU and Sudan, Bellingham, then a minister in the FCO, stated that the AU Chairman had commented on the formation of South Sudan which "was a huge exception to their normal philosophy but it was in everyone's interests that this really was made to work" and that the AU "were going to encourage Rwanda" to leverage expertise and support to South Sudan (House of Lords, 2011b, p19). For his part, Ryder acknowledged that the AU involvement, as an approach, was not enough, but nor was he sure that much more could have been done given the situation at the time. Pepera also mentioned the possible role of President Paul Kagame as an interlocutor rather than the often default white, western ex-politician or statesman. However, no evidence was found of any serious engagement by the UK or AU/IC to secure a senior African interlocutor at the time for peace building and statebuilding in South Sudan.

6.5.2 Human security, local security and justice

UNMISS has been criticised for how it contributed to state transformation and local security. But, given the late decision to deploy a mission this was not unexpected particularly with the stark numbers issue; the UNMISS military contingent was 5,329 (of 7,000 authorised). This compares to the Sierra Leone UN military strength of 17,500 albeit with a different mandate and very much less potent threat. Arguably, there is evidence that the international community was doing something to be seen to be contributing. But, the negative impact of an under-strength military contingent had already been seen in Darfur. Hence it is no surprise that in an environment of a relatively un-cooperative client state, that had very different priorities, UNMISS failed in its Chapter VII responsibilities. The UK, as a permanent member of the Security Council would have been aware of the likely outcome of an under-strength military contingent. There was a UN investigation into the failings of UNMISS to carry out a fundamental part of their mission – protection of civilians - and there were failings by contingent commanders, but the international community must take much of the responsibility as the weaknesses of UN military contingents to take proactive action under Chapter VII were well known.

As for the UK government, in addition to seeking to support SSR and hence the legitimate use of armed forces, one might have expected some emphasis on UNSCR 1325 and the UK government's National Action Plan which was specifically mentioned in the BSOS. The UK approach to UNSCR 1325 did not gain traction until Hague began championing the issue in 2010, some ten years after the UN resolution. While there had been a National Plan in 2010, no effective detail plan emerged until 2012. However, there was no specific reference to Sudan or South Sudan which were not one of the focus countries for the UK plan. That is not to suggest that DFID did not have a programme focused on girls and women. The ID Committee, in their 2012 report on South Sudan, recommended continuing focus on girls and women to which the government responded that:

> DFID South Sudan's Gender Strategy sets out how we will meet women and girls' needs both through core programmes on gender – such as work on girls' education, reproductive health and access to justice for women – and by ensuring that all our work is gender sensitive (ID Cttee, 2012b, p7).

But the programme was very much focused on services rather that security and justice or even the fundamentals of protection[98]. It was very much a service delivery approach and not institutional development, let alone aimed at conflict prevention. An interviewee commented that:

> DFID had a massive humanitarian issue on their hands; they were putting a great deal of money into the international effort to develop the country.… the international community was taking on all of the services that should have been provided by the state through technical programmes, meaning that Kiir and Riek Machar[99] had no responsibility and refused to take them but wished to profit by corruption from the state and from the oil (Interview No 24, 2019, p1).

DFID did present a security and justice programme to the ID Committee in 2012 that was also mapped to the IDPS Security and Justice pillar. However, there is little evidence that much was achieved on the ground relating to security and rights of women. Given the GOSS relationships with the Khartoum embassy, it is reasonable to suggest that the UK government was not well placed to do much on the ground other than through the UN. As South Sudan descended into civil war in 2013, the UK government's priorities turned to humanitarian aid. One is left with a view that the UK government and departments like to present a rosier picture of the UK's activities than it actually executes on the ground.

Returning to the UK government's SSR efforts, and linked to the development of the South Sudan Security and Defence Transformation Programme (SSDTP) strategy that was emerging from the new Juba embassy team, the DFID post-project assessment (DFID, 2012b) was complementary about what was achieved. The report complements the small UK team of consultants who clearly had a degree of credibility with the SPLA. But, given the timeframe of the project, the size of the team and UN involvement in SSR as well, the objectives were very limited. The overall objective was to development an effective security decision making architecture at a cost of £14.9 million over a 46-month period; the programme was rated overall as "B – Outputs moderately did not meet expectation". Summarising the project, the assessors commented that "it appears that the programme got more access and traction than expected" (DFID, 2012b, p37) and while there were successes the key area of transformation lagged behind. It was commented that the project helped:

> … embed the notion of transformation within the SPLA and also providing the technical support needed to establish the institutional and strategic foundation which will help to ensure sustainability (DFID, 2012b, p37).

This 2012 post-project evaluation is a typically rose-tinted view of what was achieved, almost looking for some positives to report. Embedding the notion of transformation is a poor outcome by any measure. There were earlier indicators to the UK government that there was a high degree of nodding agreement by South Sudan politicians and officials but, as indicated by the earlier quoted interviewee, there was little interest by local elites in advancing the goals. From a policy transfer perspective, and drawing on the issues raised by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), the project failed to achieve its objectives. A DFID

[98] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 4; absence of PPP No 1.
[99] Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the SSDF.

sponsored LSE study that focused on local violence voiced concerns at the UK's institutional approach. The study noted that:

> The current statebuilding approach emphasises the creation of strong institutions; an emphasis on decentralisation addresses Sudan's legacy of marginalisation. At the same time, this approach works counter-productively, as the very same institutions lack accountability particularly at the local level where most violence is caused.… The ambition to build institutions of a state – as put forward by GoSS and donors – and the acknowledgement of time needed to embed these institutions, is in stark contrast with the immediate need to put strong measures into place that control local violence (Schomerus et al., 2009, p96)[100].

There was no focus on conflict prevention; this was an off-the-shelf SSR statebuilding approach. It appears that the UK's SSR programme under the Coalition government lacked any new ideas or high-level drive and leadership to address the fundamental problems. The approach enabled UK departments to continue to do what they do best – sound and effective projects, based on passed lessons, that might achieve a degree of tactical success. But this approach fundamentally missed the strategic target. The same might be said of projects to support police reform, although the Safety and Access to Justice Programme was assessed as more successful (rated as achieved). For police, the UK government's effort was part of a multi-donor approach at a cost of £14 million over 44 months; this programme aimed to provide technical assistance and infrastructure (DFID, 2015b). DFID were also contributing to a UNDP Rule of Law Programme which ended in 2012, again due to the civil war, with only one of three indicators achieved – the establishment of Ministry of Interior and police policy management system. By 2012, the "MOD were prepared to do more as Afghanistan drew down" (Interview No 23, 2019, p1), and the UN were seeking finally to ramp up its efforts in South Sudan. However, politically there was not the appetite hence a logistics capability was committed to UNMISS rather than combat troops hardened by experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Transformation of the military and the police were fundamental to the formation of South Sudan and described by Bellingham as a key focus for the UK government. But the response was perhaps more technical whereas the real issues were more political. It is worth recalling that the MOD and FCO had pushed DFID into the programme, that this was a contracted-out project and that the contractor had objectives to meet in order to get paid. However, there were serious flaws in this approach. Jackson and Bakrania write that:

> There is a fundamental tension between the idea of local ownership of security and shared values underlying SSR. International donors are very keen to see states adopt transparency and accountability, but those constituting the governing elite of a state may feel that their power is threatened … As statebuilding has become a core policy for international actors, security has become central to the way in which Western Governments deal with the developing world (Jackson and Bakrania, 2018, p6).

[100] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 4.

Just reviewing the outputs of UK government's SSR programme demonstrates the limited technical nature of the UK's approach. There was an attempt to impress those western liberal approaches when the under-lying political context was the threat of internal military competition for power and resources; a tension that was not addressed by the international community. Indeed, by way of comparison, in 2018, commenting on the challenges of implementing SSR in Sierra Leone after 15 years, Jackson and Bakrania wrote "this begs the question if SSR is so difficult in a small country like Sierra Leone, then what chance for Afghanistan, South Sudan or Syria?" (Jackson and Bakrania, 2018, p14). In South Sudan the problem was compounded by the lack of clear policy or strategy by the UK government and was not bought into by local elites. It seems that templating was just an easy solution; the UK had little practical experience of structural conflict prevention and the default was institutional statebuilding which had its limitations too. But statebuilding, not a clear view of what upstream conflict prevention really meant, was the focus of the BSOS too.

6.6 Conclusion

The policy implementation study set out to address three issues: the UK government's engagement as part of an international community effort to support South Sudan; the UK government's political intent and its translation or otherwise into whole-of-government and departmental actions; and the UK government's ability to influence, assist or deliver against the broad upstream goals identified in the BSOS and the IDPS PSGs.

6.6.1 The UK government as part of an IC response

While the UK held an important role with influence within the international community and played an important role in driving coordination and cooperation with the UN and international community in Juba, it is suggested that there were fundamental flaws in both the approach of the international community and the UK government. The flaws stem from intelligence, analysis and arguably interest. Fundamentally, the international community were focused on different issues than the emergence of South Sudan as a federal or independent state and there was a high degree of ill-founded optimism and wishful thinking with respect to the future of South Sudan; this clearly influenced the UK government's thinking as to how it responded to South Sudan.

6.6.2 The UK government's political intent and strategy

The Coalition government came to power as the Sudan/South Sudan issue was reaching the culminating point of the CPA – the decision to form a federal or independent state. As a Troika nation, it would be expected that Hague and Mitchell would be involved and engaged. However, as is obvious from the comments from interviews, and the evidence from Hansard, political interest soon diminishes as much higher issues, particularly the Arab Spring, took centre stage while Afghanistan continued to hold the attention of the MOD. South Sudan, arguably a more complex issue than, for example Sierra Leone, did not have the benefit of high-level interest that was maintained over a number of years. It is therefore unsurprising that there was a lack of a whole-of-government approach, which would have needed to be driven from the NSC. Furthermore, departmental efforts and a whole-of-government approach was further hampered by the impact of the departmental austerity, particularly in the FCO, that was impacting staff across Whitehall. What is disappointing is the lack of any audit trail of strategy for South Sudan from the previous Labour government

and into the Coalition government. But this is unsurprising given the indications that the Khartoum embassy was not interested or engaged with South Sudan. Taking account of the indicators of policy (Table 3.2), there is strong evidence of the UK government muddling through with a focus on economic strategy and praying that oil revenue will bring benefits – despite the well understood phenomenon of Dutch Disease and the impact of a sharp inflow of foreign currency. That the political situation in the South was not well understood, or taken account of, is a further disappointment and accounts for much of the resultant approach by the UK government. In essence, it is argued that there was no effective strategy for either statebuilding or structural conflict prevention.

6.6.3 Structural conflict prevention

Structural conflict prevention is a complex issue with many perspectives that are difficult to capture fully. However, from the evidence gained from reports, post-project reviews and interviews several points have emerged regarding the UK government's upstream efforts. First, interviews and reports indicate that the UK government's engagement as part of a wider international community effort to support South Sudan were constrained by a group-think approach focused on the implementation of the CPA. This North-South focus was also distracted by Darfur, and Sudan as a possible base for international terrorism. Second, despite the long involvement as part of the Troika nations, there is clear evidence that the Coalition government, and previous UK governments, did not have the depth of understanding and relationships with the major actors and the GOSS to put in place an effective conflict prevention programme; not least as there was no interest by local competing elites to find solutions to their own internal issues. Finally, there is clear evidence from interviews of officials directly involved at the time to indicate that South Sudan was not sufficiently high on the UK government's priorities to warrant a whole-of-government approach; there is a case to suggest that the UK government's was not following through on its own rhetoric. The programmes that one might consider as upstream were broadly technical, and while in themselves useful and to a degree successful, they were aimed at pockets of technical expertise and the outcomes were unsustainable.

Chapter 7 – Policy implementation study: Nepal

7.1 Introduction

With Nepal being specifically identified in the upstream section of the BSOS, this policy implementation study set out to focuses on the difficulties that an apparently well-positioned and strategically thinking donor experiences for failing to partner effectively with local elites but drive on anyway. This policy implementation study set out to address: the UK government's engagement as part of an international community effort to support Nepal; the UK government's political intent and its translation (or otherwise) into whole-of-government and departmental actions; and how effective was the UK government's efforts to support security and justice of women. As with the South Sudan policy implementation study, in Nepal there is an overlap between the UK's structural conflict prevention and statebuilding actions. This policy implementation study is more complex than South Sudan and the analysis is in four parts. The chapter covers: a short historical context; international cooperation for peacebuilding and statebuilding; the UK government's political intent, strategy and whole-of-government approach; and the UK government's structural conflict prevention programme.

The policy implementation study draws heavily on international reports, Parliamentary reports, departmental programme reports and some academic articles. Interviews were targeted at those that had experience of the DFID institution/governance/human security programme as this became the primary vehicle for assessing the UK government's efforts; hence, the interviewees were mainly from DFID and INGOs/NGOs and consultants. Local voices were achieved through contacts with a Nepali NGO deputy director and a Nepali academic, but again gaining access to Nepali officials was not successful. The policy implementation study demonstrates that, without high-level leadership and agreements, on both sides (donor and recipient), the actions of officials can be at best localised and at worst nugatory.

The BSOS had placed much emphasis on partnerships although the emphasis in the BSOS is partnerships with international organisations and international partners (UN, WB, EU, regional organisations, etc.). However, the upstream pillar also identifies that the "prospects of success are greatest when support is coordinated around a country-owned strategy" (HMG, 2011, p24). This policy implementation study draws out the issues relating to when a donor's strategy or programming is apparently aligned from a donor perspective but in reality, does not necessarily accord with the direction of travel of the target state. In this policy implementation study one sees the difficulties encountered by DFID, much of its own making, as it sought to implement a statebuilding/conflict prevention programme with a state that resisted change as it was not on its own terms.

The policy implementation study draws on ideas drawn from the literature on elite bargaining and political settlements (Chapter 2). But in this policy implementation study it is from the perspective of donor government, the UK government, with an ill-defined conflict prevention policy and a statebuilding policy that was of its own design. International community and UK interventions in, for example Sierra Leone and Kosovo, allowed these actors to create or influence the development of institutional structure. But in Nepal there was a different power dynamic between donors and the target government. Hence, donors had no choice but to work with local elites to seek the institutional changes whereas

elsewhere they had been able to impose change. The analysis in this policy implementation study draws on the theory of street-level bureaucrats and the indicators of this theory set out in Table 3.2. As will be seen, relatively junior UK officials, working at the "street level" with officials from Nepali institutions and Nepali civil society, found themselves in a problematic situation between delivering objectives designed by those UK local officials to meet high-level UK policy goals and Nepali partners that had other ideas and priorities.

7.2 Context

Nepal emerged from a civil war in 2006 and since then has moved slowly from a Kathmandu-centric monarchy to a functional democracy albeit with a myriad of issues remaining. For the past 200 years the UK has had a close bilateral relationship with Nepal and, like many western states, was initially a strong supporter of the monarchy against the Maoist insurgency and blind to the underlying issues of the conflict. That position began to change after the 2006 peace agreement and the king's reversion, for a short time, to absolute rule. Since 2007, the UK government has been much more active in seeking to support peacebuilding and statebuilding in Nepal. This policy implementation study focuses upon those efforts in the period of the Coalition government.

Once again, the UK government was acting within a wider international community coalition of support to Nepal. However, based on an analysis of Hansard and, unlike South Sudan, Nepal was low on the UK government's political horizon although Nepal was still one of the highest recipients of UK aid. Hence, given the political context in Nepal, the abject poverty experienced by much of the country and Nepal's own efforts to emerge from an insurgency, this policy implementation study examines the extent to which the Coalition government intent for upstream contributed to an increased effectiveness in the UK's peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts. This section draws on official reports and academic reviews to provide sufficient background to the conflict and the political context of the conflict in order to place the role of the international community and the UK government in context (Nepal Transition to Peace, 2006, Sharma, 2006a, Thapa and Sharma, 2009, Watson and Crozier, 2009, Hall, 2011, Macours, 2011, Frieden, 2012, Panday, 2012, Sharma, 2012, Sharrock, 2013, Waldman, 2014, von Einsiedal and Salih, 2017, Stabilisation Unit, 2018a, UNDP, 2019).

Historically, the UK has had a long engagement with Nepal although it was never a colony. The earliest treaty was in 1816 which established full diplomatic ties between the two independent states. The UK underpinned Nepal's status as an independent nation in 1923, which was crucial in 1947 with Indian independence when its independent status might have been threatened. The UK's close relationship with Nepal is often associated through the links between the British Army and its recruitment of Gurkha soldiers which started in 1815, a practice that continues today. The UK's bilateral assistance to Nepal also has a long tradition with a Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship signed in 1950. UK has been consistently one of the top development partners and, historically, the UK has been second only to the US for western tourism (a significant source of foreign exchange other than foreign aid). But, notwithstanding UK's somewhat rose-tinted view of Nepal (Everest, Sherpas, and the links with the Gurkhas highlighted by Joanna Lumley's championing of their case for UK residence), the country was languishing at the bottom of the development league, placed at 166 (of 188) in 1990, and it remained at 147 (in 2017) (UNDP, 2019, Sharma, 2006b).

A joint World Bank and Government of Nepal report in 2006 assessed that, what development there had been had left 42 per cent of the population under the national poverty line in 1996, the year that the civil war started (World Bank et al., 2006). A UNU paper (von Einsiedal and Salih, 2017) gives a more nuanced picture of Nepal with literacy rates moving from 2 per cent to 43 per cent from 1951 to 2001 and improved infant mortality rates. Yet, despite the continuing low HDI, the report contends that Nepal was in the top ten for the rate of improvement in the past 40 years assisted by the $11 billion of aid in the period from 1980 to 2008. However, von Einsiedal and Salih also point out that the average figures are deceptive and leave out the deep social inequalities and injustices. Urban areas were benefitting, while in 1995/6 rural Nepal had a poverty rate almost twice that of the urban areas – a function of historical neglect by the Kathmandu-based rulers and the remoteness of the terrain. Von Einsiedal and Salih state that a number of studies link regional deprivation to the origins of the Maoist rebellion but note that the exclusion of large parts of the population based on caste, ethnicity, religion and gender feature in all analysis of the causes of the conflict. Given these factors, it is unsurprising that there was the absence of rural service delivery, the centralisation of power, and a corrupt aid economy that benefitted networks of politicians, civil servants and the business community. Politics was also polarised throughout the 1990s among the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party and royalist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (Sharma, 2012, Thapa and Sharma, 2009) with some 12 governments between 1992 and 2002. These factors are important as it impacted how, as will be seen, DFID sought to address the drivers of conflict in their development responses after the peace agreement.

The 1996–2006 war, which hardly impacted the international community (although tourism did suffer at one point) left 19,000 killed and an estimated 100,000–150,000 displaced. By the end of the war Von Einsiedal et al. (2017) suggest that the Maoists were denying state control to over 80 per cent of Nepal, although towards the end of the war they were suffering significant defeats in the field too. During the war the Western response was to see the conflict as a communist insurgency; the UK and US were supplying arms and training and broadly supported a pro-government line in Nepal. However, the increasingly autocratic rule of the royal family, with the takeover of absolute power in 2005, led to changes in the UK's position. This action also led to widespread demonstrations and condemnation by the international community and resulted in the relinquishing of monarchist power in April 2006, the Comprehensive Peace Accord in November 2006 and elections in 2008 (Stabilisation Unit, 2018a).

The ending of the war was assisted by India who intervened at key moments to break the political deadlock and resulted in the 2005 12-Point Understanding, the Ceasefire Code of Conduct and in 2006 the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) (Nepal Transition to Peace, 2006), which made way for democratic government and the end of sovereign power. India was the most important mediating power, more so than the UN; but then India also was keen to dominate in its backyard over and above other third-party powers. It is worth noting that from 2000, with the war escalating, some donors were beginning to question their assumptions and perceptions about the root causes of the conflict – and the associated support for the government. DFID is given credit for being the first donor to commission an assessment of their programmes in relation to the conflict (von Einsiedal and Salih, 2017, noting the work of Bonino and Donini); this will be returned to below.

The CPA, and the associated agreement to manage the arms and armies[101], provided roadmaps for a peace process and a role for the UN in monitoring the cantonments of the Maoist forces and the return to barracks of the Nepal armed forces. The CPA included the adoption of an interim constitution, an interim parliament and government and a commitment to elections to a Constituent Assembly in 2007; it also included a role for OHCHR monitoring of human rights and UN observers to the planned elections. In all, the CPA was a comprehensive peace agreement between two warring parties that had concluded that war would not meet their respective political ends.

The deployment of OHCHR in 2005 and the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) (2007–11) were key part of the peace process. OHCHR is credited by Von Einsiedal and Salih (2017) with highlighting abuses committed by both sides and influencing the CPS parties to address the needs of marginalised communities. However, Von Einsiedal and Salih also note that after the peace agreement OHCHR's influence was insufficient to get successive Nepalese governments to address accountability for abuses. As for UNMIN, although it involved foreign military officers with an understanding of military monitoring (e.g. from the UK), it was configured as a political mission and tasked with: monitoring and management of arms and armed personnel; assist in the monitoring of the ceasefire; and to provide technical support for the conduct of elections (UN, 2007). The elections were finally held in 2008 with the Maoists emerging as the largest party. This was a watershed moment as the Maoists had now entered the political mainstream forming a coalition government.

For its part, and notwithstanding the limited mandate, the UN mission was largely successful and the UK ambassador, commenting on UNMIN, noted that "it played an absolutely critical role, particularly in the early days in building confidence in what was still a fragile environment" (Hall, 2011, p410). But Hall also notes that, as the peace process got bogged down, the UN Security Council and Secretary General felt that there was no point in extending the mission without the meaningful political progress by the parties. The UNMIN mandate was terminated on 15 January 2011 (UN, 2010) and the task to help deal with the demobilisation of the Maoist army was left unfinished. Politically, Nepal continued to struggle, with the Maoist government resigning in 2009; a Constituent Assembly elected in 2013 (after its predecessor was dissolved) that was unable to agree on a constitution (like its predecessor) until one was hastily adopted after the trauma of the 2015 earthquake; and a constitution which then failed to address the concerns and interests of key minority groups. Federalist issues also remained unanswered (see below).

Despite the CPA, the security and political situation in Nepal was far from stable. Writing in 2012, Panday[102] commented that there was a systemic failure of development with the "inability of the people in power to design institutions, frame development policies and promote value systems relevant to the prevailing socioeconomic realities"; rather there was a lack of will to include transformation into part of the political process and a "climate of impunity and the misuse of resources are rampant with hardly anyone being held accountable" (Panday, 2012, p81).

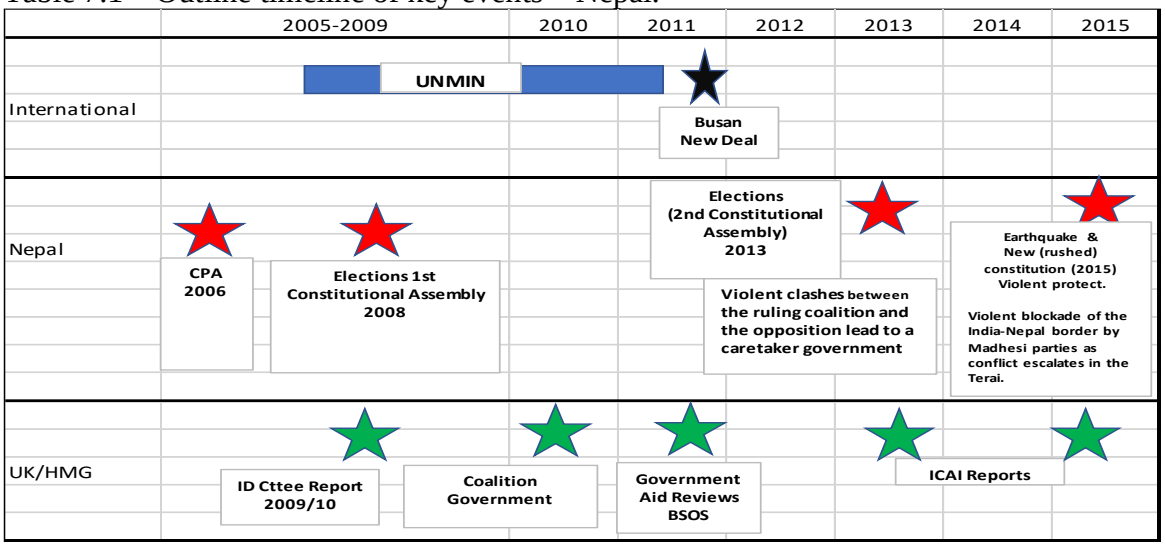
Panday's view was this resistance to change is deeply engrained in history and the dominant political culture. With this backdrop it is unsurprising to note the limitations of a broadly

[101] The Maoists armies were estimated to be 8,000–2,000 strong at the height of the conflict.
[102] A well-known society leader, human rights defender and finance minister in the 1990s.

technical approach to development. Frieden (2012), the Swiss executive director of the World Bank, noted the post-CPA shortcomings of government and institutions and the resultant view of some donors to limit budgetary support. With his experience of development in Nepal, Frieden argued for support to Nepal that focused on "the defence of human rights, democracy and inclusion" (Frieden, 2012, p112), with a focus on the poor and excluded groups. Also, Frieden was of the view that as development through government channels increases, "there is a major opportunity and imperative to encourage the government to adopt more conflict-sensitive development principles" (Frieden, 2012, p112). This was six years after the CPA.

Hence, the protracted and contested development of the constitution and the plans for federalism, coupled with the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, all added to the political and security issues in the period of the UK coalition government. The planning for federalism as intended under the rushed 2015 Constitution failed to meet the needs of the Madhesi in the Terai (borderlands with India) with only one of the provinces controlled by the Madhesi. There had already been earlier uprisings in 2007 and tensions surrounding the 2015 Constitution again spilled over to violence with a six-month blockade of the border crossing points with India (with tacit Indian support). It was within this context of ongoing political unrest, contested planning and preparation for federalism, and elites in Kathmandu who were continuing to control and direct development activities in Nepal, that the UK government was seeking to conduct statebuilding and upstream long-term conflict prevention activities. A timeline of key events can be found in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 – Outline timeline of key events – Nepal.



7.3 International cooperation for peacebuilding and statebuilding

This section places the UK government's efforts within a wider context of support to Nepal and identifies the challenges that the international community faced in supporting peacebuilding and statebuilding. It mainly draws on secondary sources as, unlike South Sudan, it was not possible to engage with actors engaged at the strategic level; it does contain the views of two interviewees (one local) who were engaged in responding to the UK's political intent to move upstream. As with South Sudan, the UK was not acting alone in

Nepal but as part of a formal and informal coalition of states and organisations with the UN taking a strong coordinating role. Notwithstanding the international community cooperation and coordination, there was criticism of the international community's effectiveness partly due to an aid bandwagon facilitated by the availability of donor funds and donor templated solutions.

The deployment of a UN mission contributed to a stabilising environment immediately after the CPA. However, unlike other UN missions around this time, UNMIN was not a unified mission and other UN organisations had been and continued to work towards peacebuilding and statebuilding as well[103]. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) had been established in Nepal since 2003 and had an important and significant presence in Nepal, but the plethora of UN organisations did result in some of the issues of leadership and coordination that a unified mission sought to overcome. Again, the UNU paper (2017) hints at the tensions noting that UNMIN was poorly placed to lead a common peacebuilding strategy with the UN country team, yet the report comments:

> … some members of UNCT expected to leave peace building to UNMIN while waiting a return to continue their business-as-usual development work. Many of the UN agencies remained stuck in the bubble of Kathmandu with noticeable exceptions of OHCHR, UNICEF and WFP (von Einsiedal and Salih, 2017, p10).

While there was certainly some progress there have also been critics of the international community's efforts too. Whitfield (2012) and Ghimire (2012, 2010) both focus on the very different position of the international community in Nepal when compared to Sierra Leone, Kosovo or even Afghanistan where elements of the international community very much controlled development. In Nepal the peace process was Nepali led and driven but supported by the international community. Both Whitfield and Bell note the way in which international organisations had "flocked to provide support to Nepal's efforts to achieve a political solution to its conflict" (Whitfield, 2012, p 161) in the period before and after the CPA. Bell (2016) comments on the proliferation of NGOs/INGOs. Bell was highly critical of the way Kathmandu "swelled with peace-building advisors and post-conflict specialists" engaging with those local NGOs apt at working the donor system (Bell, 2016, p338). Based on his engagement with development experts, Bell formed the view that:

> … the charge against foreign aid in Nepal isn't that it's achieved nothing but that it's achieved little at great cost (Bell, 2016, p 339).

Sharrock (2013) suggests that had development actors been better informed it would help them:

> … to understand the strength (not fragility) of current local political arrangements … and to distinguish between different types of patronage and corruption, in particular practices that are less harmful and may – generally for a limited period – aid stability, and those which do not (Sharrock, 2013, p 15).

In relation to the networks of patronage and elites, Sharrock, drawing on the work of De Waal in Sudan, importantly notes the failure to incorporate the role of patronage in

[103] UNDP, UNICEF and a UN Country Team (UNCT) were all operating in Nepal as entities in their own right.

political affairs and conflict management in Nepal. Sharrock emphasises De Waals point that:

> … without an understanding of how patronage works and why people 'may have more confidence in them than in weak formal institutions', external interventions in local politics will almost inevitably be misguided (Sharrock, 2013, p15).

Referencing back to the World Bank analysis of just how long it takes for institutions to develop and mature, there has been a "northern" tendency to focus on western liberal democratic views of an ideal state; this is evident in DFID's approach in Nepal as will be discussed below. Much of the commentary regarding failures of aid in Nepal seemed to be focused upon corruption and self-interest. Echoing Panday, Bell comments that:

> … the starting point … (for) Nepal's failed development is that the country's rulers have never been motivated by the national interest (Bell, 2016, p140).

He further comments that:

> … the words "development and democracy do not so much describe what's going on as conceal the system that exists (Bell, 2016, p141).

The key point emerging from the work of Bell (2016), Sharrock (2013) and Whitfield (2012) is that, notwithstanding the strong coordinating efforts of an experienced UN Resident Coordinator, local elites seemed determined to shape their own development environment, be it for traditional social welfare or more demanding political and institutional transformation activities. There is evidence of a "northern" aid bandwagon that follows a post-conflict situation as INGOs, keen to do good but also maintain their "business model", flock to take on contracts with perhaps limited local understanding; and funding was available from the UK as the aid budget was increasing given the drive to deliver the 0.7 per cent of GDP (see below). In 2009, just before the Coalition government's refocusing of the UK aid budget, Denskus was arguing the same issue. He suggested that "peacebuilding did not have real implications for sustainable development and/or majority of Nepali living outside Kathmandu and a few other urban areas" (Denskus, 2009, p56). Denskus develops this argument and suggests that "there is a strong indication … that the peacebuilding discourse may have contributed to a shell of liberal peace and governance" (Denskus, 2009, p57). He suggests that the way in which Nepali elites manage the aid process "is also a reminder of the powerful bureaucratic elite that have been governing the county for a long time" (Denskus, 2009, p58). This bandwagon of INGOs, supporting northern civil servants tasked with implementing difficult cultural and institutional transformation programmes, brings considerable difficulties in any environment (see below). Language and culture also limit who northerners interact with and this limitation becomes an opportunity for local elites; this links to an ongoing debate relating to home-based DFID staff and their expertise to execute complex transformation programmes that are not entirely bought into by the recipient government (Stewart, 2017). In the absence of a political imperative by donor governments to drive a bargain with Nepali elites in terms of their role in peacebuilding and statebuilding, as will be seen, it is suggested that the aid bandwagon will roll along with templated solutions as will be seen with DFID's Justice and Security programme (see below).

But there is also another strategic issue that impacted the degree to which the UK government could support transformation – the impact of Chinese and Indian influence and

the degree to which these superpowers would tolerate the UK's involvement. From a strategy perspective the role of regional powers should have featured highly in any political analysis. A number of sources focus on the impact of both China and India on what donor nations might achieve in Nepal. However, a recent Stabilisation Unit report (Stabilisation Unit, 2018a) on elite bargains in Nepal hints at the way in which India, for both domestic and regional reasons, takes a keen interest the international development and security agenda in Nepal and was influential in preventing an extension to the UN mandate in Nepal. Interviewees (one local and one international) (Interview No 18, 2018, Interview No 14, 2018), commenting on both India and China, noted that the approach of these two states was to influence the direction of travel of Nepal but without committing development funds particularly at the community level as with other G20 countries. It was further suggested that the Nepali elite did not feel the need for international (mainly northern) actors in their transformation; it was suggested this attitude was influenced by the Indians who were a very strong supporter on the Nepal police and army as a security bulwark for them which may well have reduced the UK government's ability to do much with either the police or the army. But one interviewee again made the point that in relation to statebuilding and SSR, there was a feeling that:

> "[the] UK must be doing something with them, not really clear why, [but there was] no strategy"; however, there was a feeling within the UK government in-country team that the UK government "must keep some kind of influence with them" (Interview No 14, 2018, p1)[104].

This was different to other more traditional areas of DFID involvement where there was clarity of purpose. A second local Nepali interviewee noted that:

> China and India's role is significant behind the closed doors and many times they will close ranks as to how the country moves forward. That is a political reality. So, there is a lot of India and Chinese politics going on … and UK does recognise those sensitivities. But I think it falls into the trap of being too sensitive … so they are not there when they have to be (Interview No 18, 2018, p1).

7.4 The UK government's political intent, strategy and whole-of-government approach

This section addresses the UK government political intent towards Nepal during the Coalition government. The main sources are Hansard and other Parliamentary documents but it also draws on interviews and for strategy development DFID-sponsored research. The key point to note is how low Nepal was on the UK government's political horizon which arguably impacts any whole-of-government approach. Although there was a clear development of strategy over time, the implementation, and arguably the objectives were more problematic. There was no whole-of-government approach which was possibly hampered by there being four ambassadors in a very short succession and the MOD which was focused on Gurkha recruitment. But DFID were not trusted partners of many Nepali elites and had difficulty in establishing the right relationships for the implementation of cooperative governance programmes with shared objectives.

[104] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental Nos 3 (absence), 4; PPP no evidence of No 1 (new ideas).

7.4.1 Political interest

Analysis of Hansard and other documents reveals the lack of political interest in Nepal by Coalition government ministers. A simple, albeit crude, initial assessment of political interest in Nepal can be seen from a search of Hansard for Nepal in the period of the Coalition government. Nepal only registered 158 times whereas even South Sudan registered 562 references. Nepal was identified in four debates in the Lords and Commons compared to twenty for South Sudan; and 12 written statements compared to 40 for South Sudan. Continuing the Hansard search for Nepal, a review of statements by the foreign secretaries and international development secretaries over the course of the Parliament reveals little of any substance. The closest reference to Nepal in terms of upstream priorities is by Hague in November 2010 when he announces that Nepal will be one of three states that will receive priority attention under the government's Women Peace and Security Plan. Although there are three Commons debates listed in Hansard these debates are no more than short exchanges between MPs and ministers and again there is nothing of substance. Finally, written statements reveal little more of the government's intent with the statements broadly covering resource allocations that include Nepal, the Gurkhas, and references to the Women, Peace and Security programme[105]. Given the lack of visibility that Nepal achieved in Parliament it is unsurprising that the longest and most substantive debate was focused on the UK government's humanitarian response following the 2015 earthquake.

The ID Committee did, of course, take more interest. In 2009/10, just prior to the Coalition government, the ID Committee had conducted a review of Nepal's aid programme and took evidence from DFID in January 2010 (ID Cttee, 2010b). As with South Sudan this timely report, and specifically DFID's written submission, provides some insight into DFID's thinking that will be covered below. However, at this point it is worth noting that the ID Committee inevitably just focused on DFID which tends to be the type of narrow focus favoured by many parliamentary committees. Notwithstanding this narrow focus, the resultant report provides a good start point as it sets out DFID's then recently published Country Business Plan, launched nine months earlier. This was not a whole-of-government approach and DFID's plan had four key goals: to support a sustainable and inclusive political settlement; to help build a more capable, accountable and responsive state at the local and national levels; to promote inclusive, low carbon, economic growth and better jobs for the poor; to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and improve resilience to climatic shocks (ID Cttee, 2010b, Ev 54). There are elements of a structural conflict prevention programme to these goals and the next subsection addresses the changing strategy of DFID.

7.4.2 DFID strategy development

Nepal was one of the highest recipients of UK aid. In 2007 DFID conducted a review of the appropriateness of UK strategy in Nepal in the period 1998 through to 2006; this review identified four stages in the evolution of DFID Nepal strategy. The authors of the report for DFID, Chapman et al. (2007), noted the early MDG focus of the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and then in 2004, "after a process of learning and analysis in 2002–3" a reorientation of "DFID's role in terms of a response to conflict" (Chapman et al., 2007, p21). There was also a doubling of resources to Nepal, but at this stage there was no apparent emphasis on structural conflict prevention or institutional development. In a 2005 strategy review, after the king had reverted to absolute rule, one notices the emphasis on supporting

[105] Table 3.2 Indicators – PPP absence of Nos 2, 3,4,5, 6.

democratic governance in both the Governance and the Peacebuilding pillars of the strategy. Chapman et al. also comment on a further 2006 DFID Programme Review noting that the 2006 CPA "brought a new strategic approach which sought to build on the peace process and build greater alignment with the [Nepali] Government" (Chapman et al., 2007, p 22). Overall, Chapman et al. agree with von Einsiedal and Salih in that DFID could have done more earlier towards conflict prevention and peace building; they suggested that DFID, along with other members of the international community, was "conflict-blind" (Chapman et al., 2007, p 22). Interestingly, they noted that the UK government/DFID might have changed direction earlier but a classified study, conducted in 2000, was not circulated as it was considered too sensitive. This was a weakness of joined-up government resulting from the lack of whole-of-government approach and departmental secrecy and possibly lack of trust. The UK's strategy at that time was to support the Nepali state and its security forces to contain the Maoists.

Chapman et al. felt. that the evolution of the 2006 country strategy and later Country Assessment Plan were milestone documents and were "outspoken in recognising the validity of Maoist concerns – something most other donors were reluctant to state publicly" (Chapman et al., 2007, p 23). But Chapman et al. also note that there were major whole-of-government alignment difficulties as the Plan was out of alignment with a 2004 UK confidential strategy for conflict resolution. Unfortunately, Chapman et al. find that although peacebuilding and governance begin to get a much higher focus after 2004, there was "no clear strategy" beyond the broad statements (Chapman et al., 2007, p 35); a view reinforced by Professor Jackson in interview. Chapman et al. comment on the lack of matching of strategic ambitions and resources for peacebuilding and social inclusion; strategic ambitions were not linked to budget and staff resources; and, as will be seen, that was to continue under the Coalition government. Indeed, the scale of the mismatch is of concern given that conflict was a major driver of poverty. Structural peacebuilding was also confined to Kathmandu, which is unsurprising given that at the time there was only one conflict advisor despite conflict issues dominating almost the whole country.

The 2009 Country Business Plan, issued before the Coalition government, builds on the past and has a high degree of continuity in strategy, albeit with adjustments. The main development over the previous 2005 programme review was a more focused emphasis on climate change, not political stability or institutional transformation. DFID had highlighted their highest risk to their programme as political instability and return to conflict, which they felt was being addressed in the programme and as part of a wider international community response. In their peacebuilding efforts, DFID stated that they were focusing on: the political settlement, core state functions and "meeting expectations of the people" (ID Cttee, 2010b, p Ev 56). DFID were reporting a whole-of-government approach but how this was being done is unclear (see below). Focusing on political settlements DFID reported the need to: support excluded groups, support national elections and support gender with the training of female political leaders. As for core state functions the focus was on: improved police capacity, access to formal and informal justice for the poor, job creation, climate change and support to a multi-donor local governance programme. Finally, DFID noted the need for a long-term approach and not just to concentrate on the MDGs; DFID, as elsewhere, was effectively providing functions that the state was not yet delivering, namely health, roads and social protection.

The ID Committee picked up on the relationship between UK departments and their support to the CPA and SSR. In DFID's response, after a lengthy introduction, that is full of good doctrinal statements of cooperation, international cooperation and support to UN agencies (e.g. OHCHA), DFID's actual programme comes down to two paragraphs. DFID reported that it, and the Conflict Prevention Fund, supported CPA implementation with £11 million of funding through: the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (a government owned and implemented peace fund) which received £7 million to support elections to the Constituent Assembly, the construction and maintenance of Maoist military cantonments, and Internally Displaced People; and a contribution of £4 million to the UN Peace Fund for Nepal which supported verification of Maoist combatants, disposal of explosive ordnance at cantonments, mine clearing, targeted employment creation and technical assistance to the electoral process (ID Cttee, 2010b, p Ev 59). DFID noted that:

> … discussions are underway with the Home Ministry for a major DFID funded public security support project. This would focus primarily on helping the police improve the service they provide to the public at the community level, but would also provide strategic policy and planning support centrally to the Police and Home Ministry (ID Cttee, 2010b, p Ev 59).

It is this latter programme that will be scrutinised in detail in this policy implementation study as it was a major pillar of structural conflict prevention and statebuilding effort[106].

Despite an apparent evolving strategy by UK/DFID that was responding to strategic events, it is worth noting that, notwithstanding the above, in the view of the OECD, Nepal had been an underfunded aid orphan, every year from 2006 to 2012 (OECD, 2015b, p61). After the Coalition government aid review, the 2011 BAR for Nepal for the period 2010–2015 placed it just outside the government's top 20 countries/regions (21 out of a reduced list of 33 country/region bilateral programmes). The BAR priorities for Nepal were: supporting the peace process, strengthening governance and improving security and access to justice; helping poor and excluded people benefit from growth; delivering better health and education; helping people adapt to climate change; and reducing risk from disasters, including earthquakes (DFID, 2011a, p20). While the priorities included governance and security, there were no associated key results[107]. In fact, the BAR only listed key results in female contraception and jobs for forest dependent people which are of course easier to measure and more controllable core activity projects. Hence, despite an apparent mature strategy development process over a long period, and despite high-level objectives aimed at conflict prevention and statebuilding following the CPA, there is still a lack of any real detail or hard objectives at the strategic level. The detailed development of policy was happening at a much lower level – at the programme level[108].

7.4.3 ICAI reviews and criticisms

During the Coalition government, the ICAI conducted two reviews of interest to this research; a review into DFID's *Peace and Security Programme in Nepal* (2013) and a wider assessment of DFID's approach to security and justice generally (2015). Overall, the ICAI

[106] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 2.
[107] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 1.
[108] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental No 4.

did not feel that DFID was adapting "the direction and aims of its peace and security programme over time, which may jeopardise its future potential" (ICAI, 2013, p1).

A worrying indicator of a lack of confidence in the approach is the ICAI's observation on the 2012 DFID governance and security programme where it noted "there are no headline measures for 96% of DFID's Governance and Security spending" (a £92.9m programme) (ICAI, 2013, p13), a trend that was also identified in the BAR. The ICAI criticised what measures existed as being very modest in design and reflecting outputs rather than outcomes. While the focus of criticism was on the DFID in-country team, it should be borne in mind that the implications of the political intent in BSOS was still relatively new in Whitehall. However, as has been seen, the development of policy, be it departmental or inter-departmental, did not seem to advance the implementation of in-country security and justice greatly.

The thematic review of Security and Justice in 2015, primarily in DFID, but also covering the Stabilisation Unit, targeted how the UK was meeting its objectives to improve security and justice for women and girls. This was a key part of the BSOS upstream pillar and William Hague's drive for results; Nepal was one of the review's focus states. The relevance of this to this policy implementation study is twofold: first, the similarities in the comments regarding a lack of DFID strategy; and second, by this time, if BSOS policy intent was working its way through, one might have begun to see a degree of top-down coherence. It is worth noting two general points made by ICAI, first:

> … overall, we are concerned that the portfolio suffers from a lack of management attention, leading to unclear objectives and poor supervision of implementers (ICAI, 2015b, p5).

And second:

> DFID informs us that it has chosen not to develop an overarching strategy for its S&J assistance, preferring to allow country offices to identify their own solutions to local challenges and opportunities, in order to respond to context. In the absence of clear guidance, however, we found that DFID S&J programmes tend to be fairly similar in composition, suggesting a lack of adaptation to context (ICAI, 2015b, p10).

The lack of strategic direction from Whitehall is a concern, given the known high turnover of staff between field and HQ appointments, compounded by DFID being a home-based department without the terms and conditions of service of, for example, the FCO, that rewards long service overseas, particularly for more senior staff with families and children[109]. One of the by-products of the rapid turnover of officials is perhaps a degree of templating of solutions. Furthermore, linking to policy theory, there are indications of how officials involved in the execution of policy can find themselves both creating government policy at the local level and then executing effectively their own policy; this theme will be examined in Chapter 8.

[109] This links to Rory Stewart's criticism of skills and terms and conditions of service while a minister.

7.4.4 A country-level view

The Head of DFID Nepal at the time of the BAR review, Sarah Sanyahumbi, commented that there was a one-government strategy for Nepal and that "we have got a lot better at this over the last 10 years" (Interview No 11, 2018, p1); but she did not attribute this particularly towards BSOS. Sanyahumbi noted the rigour behind the BAR analysis between the in-country team and DFID London-based staff on the DFID Drivers of Change process. She commented that, with a "dysfunctional [Nepali] government at the time" (Interview No 11, 2018, p1), DFID had based the programme on poverty and addressing the root causes of conflict, working both bilaterally and through the UN; she commented on the integration of combatants and work with the police adding, "I'm not sure we got very far with that" (Interview No 11, 2018, p1). Commenting on the way in which the in-country team worked, Sanyahumbi stated that there was a very strong but not exclusive relationship with the Government of Nepal. The DFID team, she said, worked very closely with the ambassador but the FCO team did not have the capacity to engage substantively on governance projects; although she also noted that the way in which the FCO tend to work now, as part of a whole-of-government team, is changing with a tendency for ambassadors to be more engaged. As for the MOD, the DA's focus was very much on the Gurkhas and was not involved in SSR and arguably was not interested. On the whole-of-government theme, Sanyahumbi commented that cross-Whitehall engagement was not there. This was reinforced by a Whitehall insider associated with the UK government's efforts in Nepal over a number of years; it was commented that unlike Afghanistan, or Sierra Leone and other places, "whenever you come to Nepal this was a DFID, and a DFID alone programme" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1). In Whitehall, Nepal was not considered a whole-of-government approach.

With regard to the governance programme, Sanyahumbi commented that it very much depended on the political cycle in terms of support to elections, disarmament or the constitution with the governance programme "overlaying the basic pillars of what DFID does well – health, education, climate change" (Interview No 11, 2018, p1). One got the impression that the programme was very much in-country led. That Nepal was a lower priority for Whitehall helped the in-country team as "you don't have the Whitehall spotlight on it. If you have the Whitehall spotlight on you, then it is much, much harder to do anything and there is a lot more direction coming from Whitehall… In Nepal,… it was 90% country led" (Interview No 11, 2018, p1)[110]. Sanyahumbi commented that institutional reform and governance issues were difficult and took time. Specifically, on police reform she commented that "you have got to be invited … to do that and [to] have any traction, they have got to invite you in and they have got to be open to it" (Interview No 11, 2018), an indication that the Nepali officials did not see the world in the same way as DFID officials[111]. This approach by the DFID country team also brings a significant drawback in that without the political spotlight there is inevitably less resources (particularly from other departments). In addition, there is then a reliance on the skills and experience of the in-country office. While this seems to work well for core DFID functions, it will be argued that, for a still novel and complex transformation governance programme (see below), this approach, of leaving programme development and execution to junior officials, had significant drawbacks. It also began to raise issues about the extent to which junior officials were actually creating policy and executing that policy – in line with the theory of street-level bureaucrats (Table 3.2).

[110] Table 3.2 Indicators – Street bureaucrat Nos 2, 3.
[111] Table 3.2 Indicators – Street bureaucrat No 3.

To get invited to assist, and to be able to execute one's strategy, there must be some degree of effective relationships. One gets the view that at the time, for a variety of reasons, the relationships were not there[112]. In the period under review (2010–2015) the UK had had four ambassadors to Nepal, not ideal for building relationships. Despite comments by DFID interviewees of how the ambassador had worked towards creating the conditions for the security and justice programme, one interviewee[113] had commented that, with the British embassy and DFID's offices at the other ends of Kathmandu, there was minimal practical coordination of efforts. It was also commented by the same interviewee how well-versed Nepali officials were in managing donors, so one must look to outcomes for evidence of buy-in to challenging societal transformation programmes driven by donors. Another interviewee[114] noted that at that time ambassadors were often of the old school, whereby they saw their role as representing the UK government and not to get involved in the business of DFID's programmes[115]. Notwithstanding these observations, the 2014 annual programme review (DFID, 2015a) claimed that the Government of Nepal had considerable buy-in for the programme.

However, it was suggested in interviews that 2011 and 2012 were not a particularly good time for donors, particularly DFID. One interviewee suggested that DFID's support to issues like federalism, which were part of the CPA but were highly political with no clear way forward in Nepal, were causing difficulties for DFID. Because of the political context at the time there was "resentment towards donors and DFID got a lot of the blame for this" and there was a "perception in civil society and Nepalis in Kathmandu … that DFID had helped introduce social inclusion in Nepal that were aimed at dividing the country" (Interview No 14, 2018, p1). Another issue was the re-write of the constitution and:

> DFID were seen to be supporting marginalised groups who wanted a more inclusive Nepali state. They were seen to be supporting in a way that was dividing the country (Interview No 14, 2018, p1).

While this may have been perception rather than reality, perceptions are important and there were demonstrations outside the offices of DFID in Kathmandu. This, as will be seen, was at the same time as DFID were seeking to launch their major upstream institutional transformational programme with the police that also had wider social and cultural implications. A Whitehall source commented that the Nepali suspicions of DFID "left a legacy that persisted for some considerable years. There was certainly a feeling from the Nepalis,… that our reliability was being questioned as to how good a partner we could be" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1). But it was also suggested that Nepal itself did not know what it wanted to achieve in terms of institutional transformation as there was still an ongoing debate about the nature of a federal state. Another interviewee, an INGO with a depth of experience in Nepal (and South Sudan) commented that part of the problem with DFID, and other donors working with the police, was that SSR was:

[112] Table 3.2 Indicators – Street bureaucrat absence of No 4.
[113] Interviewee No 14.
[114] Interviewee No 11.
[115] It was also noted that, driven perhaps by the experience of DFID, FCO (and MOD) staff in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, the tendency to remain stove-piped was reducing as a result of very different career experiences of staff from across departments. This is worthy of further investigation but has not been followed through in this research.

> "seen as something that they had to do" but they did not look at the "political settlement" and "what was possible for DFID to do and was achievable in that context" (Interview No 14, 2018, p1)[116].

If this was the context for programme development between the respective UK and Nepali officials, then without a doubt there were challenges ahead for the execution of DFID's projects and programmes.

7.5 The UK government's structural conflict prevention programmes

This section focuses on the DFID main security and governance programme that was a key part of their overall programme in value terms. This programme links to the BSOS institution building as well as Hague's focus on UNSCR 1325 and the Women Peace and Security plan. As such it has elements of both upstream conflict prevention and statebuilding. DFID Nepal sought to implement a complex security and justice programme that following a templated DFID approach that was being criticised by the ICAI. The political conditions had not been created for a successful implementation of this programme which resulted in delays, compromised goals, and only some limited local successes. This was a flagship DFID Governance and Security programme that was struggling to get the skills and influence necessary to implement an institutional and transformation programme at considerable cost to UK taxpayers at a time of austerity.

7.5.1 An overview

At the same time as the Parliamentary Report on justice and SSR in Nepal, an EU-funded report in 2010, *Participation and Obstruction: Justice and Security Sector Reform in Nepal* (Crozier and Candan, 2010), was already raising issues about the international community's approach to police reform. Crozier and Candan's report examined the aid sector's support to security and justice which followed an earlier International Alert report in 2009, *Security for Whom? Security Sector Reform and Public Security in Nepal* (Watson and Crozier, 2009). In the 2010 report Crozier and Candan provided evidence that there was a political appetite by donors to address the causes of insecurity through both policy reform and capacity-building measures. The UN had its own programme, of which DFID was a major contributor, and the UN was a delivery partner to DFID's own security and justice programme too; this is an indicator of the high level of international cooperation that did exist at the time. However, there are also indicators of the challenges the both the international community and DFID were facing. What becomes clear is that fundamentally, the issues for executing security and justice reform in Nepal were both political and programming in a situation that was complicated by a lack of clear local Nepali political direction.

DFID's 2012 Operational Plan for Nepal, updated in December 2014, stated that through the Security and Justice for the Poor programme, DFID would support men and women so that they are better protected from violence and have better access to fair and equitable justice. With respect to the police, DFID noted that "by April 2016, we will have improved the relationship between police and the public in eight districts by making facilities and police personnel more welcoming to local communities" (DFID, 2014b, p7). The plan

[116] Table 3.2 Indicators – Street bureaucrat No 3.

further describes the aim to improve access to justice in an additional 20 districts. Hence, this was a widely dispersed programme that required complex coordination as it involved central and local authorities. Interestingly, under "Challenges", the plan states that there is a need to ensuring effective risk management in governance and security programming "in high risk areas such as police reform and the development of local governance" (DFID, 2014b, p13).

Violence against women was a major issue in Nepal and was an issue being addressed by both the FCO under Hague and DFID. A 2016 OECD DAC report (OECD DAC, 2016) on security, justice and rule of law reaffirmed the main priorities for development assistance. But the OECD DAC report importantly notes the need for "further debate about the limits to joined-up work on security, justice and the rule-of-law across ministries" and a "more systematic articulation of theories of change" for these programmes (OECD DAC, 2016, p 7-8). The report commented on there being "no single guidance document" on these programmes and a tension between development/poverty and security and stabilisation probably reflecting the different internal drivers of donor ministries. Research by the GSDRC[117] (GSDRC, 2016) which provides a useful overview of the security and justice debate, emphasise: the political nature of security and justice; the need for local ownership; the risk from donor perspectives of being seen to be involved in organisations associated with human rights violations; the problems of coordination and the difficulties of design, monitoring and evaluation. The GSDRC noted that there have been "few proven or replicable models for programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts" with interventions "based on implicit and inaccurate theories or embedded in the skills, approaches and perspectives of individuals and organisations" (GSDRC, 2016, p1)[118].

Given the academic debate advocating more integration there is an argument to suggest that in 2012 DFID was seeking to adopt the latest thinking from academia in their integrated approach without strategic clarity of how it might be implemented, let alone the conditions on the ground being right (from a UK government or Nepali perspective).

7.5.2 The challenges of working with an uncooperative partner

Overall, there is evidence that the DFID officials were struggling to launch their programme due to the inability to get Nepali officials to agree to the approach. However, one might make the same comment about UK officials from the Nepali perspective; there is evidence of a failure to align goals and the ways and means of achieving them. With the Nepal government being somewhat unstable, Sanyahumbi noted that it was difficult to work with government and hence there was a tendency to focus on senior officials with whom she worked closely. However, on institutional reform there was little progress in 2010/11; a timeframe that coincided with the attempts to get a Police Reform Programme launched. Sanyahumbi stated that there were:

> … conversations around security and justice and the need to do something around security and justice. I don't think we were able to find a way in terms of

[117] A partnership of research institutes, think-tanks and consultancy organizations with expertise in governance, social development, humanitarian and conflict issues.
[118] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of Incremental Nos 3 (effective learning) & 4 (effectiveness not appropriateness).

how you do that given the context of the country at the time (Interview No 11, 2018, p1)[119].

This comment tends to support the 2013 ICAI view on Nepal's peace and security programme that there was "poor translation of political analysis into programming" (ICAI, 2013, p1). This may suggest a lack of appropriate skills and reflects Sharrock's views on donor understanding mentioned earlier in which police reform came in for specific criticism. Sharrock, writing at the time, had commented that he had "less confidence in the ability of large development organisations to integrate and implement political analysis into their planning and programming" (Sharrock, 2013, p17). A Whitehall insider further commented that by 2012 he had found that relationships between DFID and the Nepali authorities had changed considerably. It was noted that due to tensions around DFID's perceived position on federalism and the failed police programme, access to government was certainly curtailed. It was commented that:

> … in terms of senior officials there has always been a view that [the] UK could play a role as a result of history but that does mean you have an automatic right of entry … [the project team] found that that automatic entry that may have existed at one time no longer exists" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1).

Furthermore, they remarked:

> … in earlier years I would have had direct access to the Prime Minister and others, that would not have been the case whenever I was there [after 2012] … there was a much greater tension in the relationship, and clearly the work was perhaps prioritised in a different way by the Government of Nepal (Interview No 20, 2018, p1).

This lack of effective relationships was to have an impact on the execution of DFID's core conflict prevention/statebuilding programme[120].

7.5.3 Programme execution – security and justice

Reading the programme reports, there is evidence that the complexity of a transformation programme, across many stakeholders, in many geographic areas, seems to have been significantly underestimated. This is notwithstanding the efforts of the Head of DFID Nepal, and the UK Ambassador to create the conditions for the programme (as reported by an official[121]). But it was not just the UK government programme that was encountering difficulties in 2013. The Nepal Peace Trust Fund, to which DFID was the largest donor, had also required renegotiation and staff were in the process of producing a new strategy which was proving problematic due to a lack of consensus both between donors and with the Government of Nepal on the Truth and Reconciliation Act. However, the Nepali government also seemed to have their own view of what was important as it was commented that "in terms of what the Nepali's saw, [it] was perhaps less important to them than other work in earlier years had been" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1).

[119] Table 3.2 Indicators – Incremental Nos 3, 4; Street bureaucrat absence of No 4.
[120] Table 3.2 Indicators – Street bureaucrat absence of No 4.
[121] Interview No 20.

With regard to the police aspects of the project, there is no clear evidence of Stabilisation Unit involvement beyond touchpoints to assist in positioning the project. The Home Office gave a small degree of support through a visit by HM Inspector of Constabulary to provide advice on federalism and police standards, but there was no evidence of a sustained, UK whole-of-government effort. Given the previous programme failures, it is argued that it would have been imperative that a second police project was positioned in such a way as to be successful. A DFID source[122] suggested that a "peer-to-peer" approach would have been better but Nepal, as reflected in the Stabilisation Unit Business Plan of the time, was just not high enough up the UK government's priorities. At a time of government austerity in the UK, with UK constabularies under pressure, it was suggested that getting a senior police officer allocated to the programme was almost impossible. Nepal was not a security threat to the UK unlike Nigeria or Somalia. But it was also pointed out by a source that the Nepali police had made it clear that they "would not accept any technical assistance in this programme" (Interview No 19, 2018, p1), although the main DFID drive of this programme was community safety and security and not police transformation. Police transformation was a focus in as much as there was a desire to see better police-community relationships particularly in relation to gender-based violence. This theme of gender-based violence certainly links to the high-level objectives that were being driven by Hague back in Whitehall. But, without the right resources in place, there is a question about the effectiveness of the whole approach. There is evidence that the ambitious policy transfer objectives set out in the business case were not achieved.

By any measure this programme was ambitious. The business case presents a complex picture of the challenges to both demand-side (victim) and supply-side (state institutions) in delivering justice, particularly to women. Like many business cases it seeks to pick up on in-vogue language like Cameron's "Golden Thread" and seems to be championing the normative debate on an integrated approach by referencing the combining of "central systems and frontline delivery in a critical mass of districts [that] will drive transformation at the strategic level" (DFID, 2014a, p19). The focus from the outset was on frontline delivery but the need to strengthen central-level systems and influence incentives was also identified. In the risk section there were 15 risks identified of which nine are medium/high to high; but the level of mitigation of all these nine, medium to high, risks was medium/low.

Hence, this was a high-risk ambitious programme with a value of £35m to be spread over five years; the budget was to rise to £45.5m as the programme clock was re-started at 2014 and extended to 2020 (data from 2018 ICAI report) [123]. Unfortunately, the business case spends little time describing how the project had been positioned with Nepali institutions and civil society; with the background of the previous failed police reform efforts this is surprising. Given the known difficulties of working in Nepal, the business case did emphasis that the only option was a "flexible framework programme" (DFID, 2014a, p 23);

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[122] Interview No 20.

[123] A key factor in this thesis is impact or effect. Impact is different from outputs and when assessing impact, it was necessary to keep in mind opportunity cost for the UK taxpayer which is linked with the utility debate regarding the increase of the aid budget to 0.7 per cent of GDP. For example, by the end of the Coalition government, the average primary school annual budget in the UK was in the order of £1.04m and a secondary school was £4.62m. Hence, this programme was consuming resources equivalent to running costs in the order of over 40 primary or 10 secondary schools for a year. It helps to keep in perspective the large numbers that are often used in government projects be it aid or, for example, defence. This is a simple, but relevant and important, measure of opportunity cost for the UK taxpayer to keep in mind as one considers the impact of HMG's "upstream" efforts. Available: https://www.besa.org.uk/key-uk-education-statistics/

but this was placing considerable discretion on the local UK government/DFID Nepal team to develop policy and deliver. Yet the ID Committee had heard evidence of a team (in 2010) that had commitment and enthusiasm but not the local knowledge and local networks to deliver complex projects (ID Cttee, 2010b). It has not been possible in this research to assess whether the individual skills had significantly changed by the time of this new project, but the research has sought to understand if the Coalition government intent for a more effective whole-of-government approach was implemented. But perhaps the fault lies more with the Whitehall approving authorities who did not challenge sufficiently the business case, given the failure of the previous police programme and the obvious cultural and institutional transformation issues at the central and the local level that are at the heart of the business case. A DFID interviewee commented that the DFID business cases at the time "lacked political analysis" (Interview No 25, 2019, p1), which was hampered by austerity measures reducing the FCO analysis capability.

Overall, there is evidence that Whitehall was content to delegate considerable discretion to the country team. It seems that UK officials were failing to achieve the level of buy-in and cooperation required to deliver their programme. Despite the New Deal aim, for strategies and plans to be locally led, this does not seem to be the case in the UK's security and justice programme. It seems that DFID officials did not have an aligned strategy and were not acting in consort with the Nepali government. Rather UK officials were seeking to plough a furrow of their own design. But societal transformation, as identified by the WB, takes time to achieve while DFID officials were driving to a short-term business case timeframe with a spend profile to deliver. Hence officials may have attempted to drive through or round obstacles rather than taking a long view.

7.5.4 Whole-of-government

The DFID security and justice programme was an expensive, flagship programme yet inter-departmental bureaucracy appears to have blocked inter-departmental cooperation on a key programme that was far from being on-track. What is perhaps surprising, given the direction in the BSOS, the value of the programme, the priority being given to police reform, gender violence and the known political difficulties of operating in Nepal, is the apparent optimism at the beginning of the planning process. This suggests a lack of sufficiently senior engagement in understanding the complexities of what was being proposed and guiding junior staff in their efforts. Certainly, in comparison to the personal experience of transformation programmes, the seniority and level of management effort in Nepal at the time was woefully low. Inter-departmental bureaucracy and headcount seemed to have prevented DFID from bringing in experts from the Stabilisation Unit to assist in the management of the complex integrated project. This is typical of the issues that arise within departments when dealing with high programme costs but capped at an insufficient level of running costs which was made more difficult as it involves multiple departments. But, one Whitehall source was keen to emphasise the point, time and again, that the IP-SSJ "was a DFID programme" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1) and should not be compared to cross-departmental efforts like Sierra Leone or Afghanistan. Notwithstanding the clear limitations of a whole-of-government approach, a previous Nepal DFID country head commented in interview that:

> … one of the tensions in doing governance … it takes a long time and actually having something to show for it is really, really difficult.… We had an utterly dysfunctional government [to work with], so where do you start in governance?

> I think it is fair to say that FCO were very, very small; I think they had three UK based staff while I was there and a couple of local staff who were quite good but quite junior. So, the technical expertise was absolutely within DFID (Interview No 11, 2018, p1).

7.5.5 Insufficient influence

Influence, and the ability to assist a partner nation, relies on organisational and individual credibility. This is not a criticism levelled at the efforts of individual staff, specifically DFID staff, who were clearly working tremendously hard to deliver the mandate they were given. The issue is whether those staff were best placed to influence the desired outcomes of the programme and was the overall approach well-conceived.

On SSR generally, Ghimire (2017), a Nepali/Australian researcher writes that unlike Sierra Leone and elsewhere "[the UK government] was not in a steering position in Nepal to drive SSR towards its own plan", and given the complexities added in by the competing powers of China and India, "Nepal's SSR reflected outcomes of a tripartite conflict of interests between elites, regional powers and great powers" (Ghimire, 2017, p1426). This view is supported by Jackson's comments when he noted that "the international community at that time was a mess" (Interview No 6, 2017, p1), while India was Nepal's most important ally strategically and the UK its trusted advisor. However, again echoing the concerns of Crozier, Canden and Watson, Jackson went on to comment on the UK's wider understanding stating that:

> … the British have never really grasped the broader picture.… Whenever they have tried to do anything different to [poverty] they have not been particularly brilliant at it; policing in particular. There have been several attempts to start big police programmes. They have all foundered on the basis that the relationship with the Home Minister has been appalling, or the people that they [the Nepali] have picked to lead the police have had terrible human rights records, which has happened at least twice. They [DFID] are starting again because the police is massively important in Nepal. There are some pretty good police officers, but as an institution it is pretty wretched (Interview No 6, 2017, p1).

Other interviewees reinforced this view of the lack of clarity on the UK government's objectives in partnership with the Nepali government. A senior Nepali NGO deputy director commented that he thought that DFID "are trying to figure out what is the problem they are going to address; they are not very clear on that part … they are offering a lot of solutions – but to do what?" (Interview No 18, 2018, p1)[124].

7.5.6 Limitations in the delivering security and justice transformation

Local understanding and relationships will continue to be an issue for the UK government given the high turnover of staff. It is possible that this lack of local knowledge contributes to a degree of templating of solutions that one interviewee suggests was being offered in relation to security and justice; this perhaps is borne out by the criticisms of the ICAI (Section 7.4.3). A local Nepali also suggested that UK government staff were not

[124] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of PPP Nos 3, 4,5, 6, 7.

helping to shape the agenda to address issues but were reacting to events[125]; he commented that DFID "rush to address [issues] when things are happening with their solutions rather than trying to understand the problem" (Interview No 18, 2018, p1). Another commented that "donors have much less power than people think.… They have to think over the long term … which for many of them is not possible but that is the only way that change happens" (Interview No 14, 2018, p1)[126]. This again suggests a lack of expertise and resources and there was evidence of this in the annual reports, together with a drive to deliver the business case funding profile.

A Whitehall insider challenged the notion that there was a lack of resource suggesting that the issue might have been lack of priority across government with DFID opting to drive forward with its programme anyway. The Whitehall source, with experience of a number of SSR efforts, including Nepal, commented that "I would not have wanted to manage the programme, I have considerable sympathy for the problem" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1) that the local DFID staff were facing. But one also sees evidence that, although the IP-SSJ programme was one of the largest in the Nepal office at the time, due to the focus on post-earthquake reconstruction, other priorities were at play that left the programme in relatively junior hands. However, in the context of the Nepali transformation project, it also was commented that the key reason for lack of progress was not about the knowledge and length of time in-country of staff but on the strategy and local conditions. But this limitation in local knowledge, expertise and relationships, albeit this would probably be contested by FCO/DFID staff who in interview and in Parliamentary reports defended their level of knowledge and expertise, places more emphasis on departments using Western and local contractors to execute their programmes – and without the conditions properly engineered for success this is wasteful. Personal experience of the anomaly of insufficient internal technical effort being available for multi-million pound projects seems typical of what was happening in Nepal. Given the government austerity measures at the time, this is not surprising but it puts at risk government spending and forces more contracting than might be desirable, especially where government-to-government influence is critical in creating the conditions for a successful institutional transformation project.

The rapid increase in the aid budget and the lack of internal DFID staff to execute projects and programmes has resulted in an increase in international and local NGOs being employed. Although there are advantages and a cost-effectiveness in using international NGO staff, it became clear during interviews that this tendency to contract out did result in the watering down of objectives and the contracted programme indicators of success. Two well-placed interviewees (Interview No 14, 2018, p1, Interview No 18, 2018, p1) commented on how, in order to get an NGO on contract, objectives had to be compromised with indicators developed that enabled contractors to deliver some degree of success, otherwise contractors would not take on the contracts. But the issue was also linked to the perceived pressure on departmental (in particular DFID) staff to meet their spending targets – which leads back to the business case in which the funding profile would have been set out and would have been taken forward into financial forecasting. For one interviewee the pressure to spend budgets was clearly tied in with the decision to spend 0.7 per cent of GDP; he commented that there was:

[125] Table 3.2 Indicators – absence of PPP Nos 3,4, 5, 6, 7.
[126] Table 3.2 Indicators – issues with Incremental Nos 2, 3, 4, 5.

> pressure to create programmes that push money out the door but things that would need to happen with the police are not that type of programmes necessarily. They try to build in training and equipment as a lever to get access … but the police are aware of these kinds of approaches (Interview No 14, 2018, p1).

Returning to the indicators in Table 3.2, policy seems to have provided little direction. Reflecting on policy theory, the idea that policy works when there is a window of opportunity created with policies ready to be adopted does not seem to apply in the Nepal case. What was happening in Nepal seems not to have been learning from the experience of the cancelled police reform programme. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that these programmes were being run at a relatively junior level by those who may not have had the experience of past SSR/police reform efforts and were driving forward a new DFID approach to security and justice that, as has been suggested, was founded more in theory than in evidence. That there was an absence of UK police or Stabilisation Unit involvement is likely to have compounded the difficulties. By way of balance, reviewing DFID's 2017 annual report there is evidence that there was progress in the programme, and it was beginning to meet objectives (to what extent they match the original is less clear). Time will tell how well the original objectives fit the circumstances and resources.

7.6 Conclusions

As with the South Sudan policy implementation study this policy implementation study examined: the UK government's engagement as part of an international community effort to support Nepal; the UK government's political intent and its translation or otherwise into whole-of-government and departmental actions; and, narrowing in on one specific area, how effective was the UK government's efforts to support security and justice of women as Nepal was targeted in the Hague/FCO led initiative for UK's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. This section draws together the threads of what was a wicked problem in as much as it was complex and dependent on so many factors and actors with different goals and perspectives. Hence for the DFID staff it was difficult to grasp how to tackle their objectives. Realism dictated that they had to reduce their expectations and muddle through.

7.6.1 Political relationships must create the conditions

There was a long-term, well-developed and evolving strategy for Nepal which had been adjusted as events changed. Nepal was a low priority for the UK government which also meant that the in-country team were also left much to their own devices by Whitehall departments too; nor did Nepal gain much Parliamentary focus until the earthquakes in 2015. The relationships of the UK's embassy and Nepali politicians and officials would have been affected by there being four ambassadors over a five-year period and two heads of DFID in the same timeframe. But DFID's position in Nepal was difficult as the Nepali government was hostile to some of the programmes and positions being taken by DFID with respect to the CPA and federalism. Hence, a combination of a resistant local elite, a low UK government priority for ministers and a lack of continuity in the UK government's senior representation in Nepal all contributed towards a failure to agree on goals with the Government of Nepal.

The IP-SSJ programme demonstrated how the UK government continues to find it difficult to implement upstream conflict prevention/statebuilding programmes. At a strategic and programme level, the Nepali elite were not aligned to the UK approach, nor at the institutional level did the UK have senior police-police relationships (as in Sierra Leone). The key issue for this thesis is the lack of linkage between BSOS political intent, Whitehall policy development and local country-level programme execution. What was missing was a coherent inter-departmental approach, drawing on relevant expertise and undertaken with a clear partnership of shared objectives and risks with the Nepali government.

7.6.2 Street-level bureaucracy: translating grand objectives of government

With the absence or limitations of UK high-level engagement to agree with local elites a way of working, taking forward the UK's programme was very much left for DFID's junior officials working with "street-level organisations"[127], the aid bandwagon, as partners to deliver their objectives. However, DFID and its delivery partners were not only compromising objectives in order to get NGOs on contract to deliver against achievable objectives, but they were also butting up against Nepal's own officials with their own ideas of what was to be achieved.

While this policy implementation study has focused to an extent on the IP-SSJ programme, it has only been in way of example of understanding why the UK government continues to find it difficult to implement upstream conflict prevention. It is clear is that the UK government/DFID was acting in consort with the international community; indeed, branches of the UN were acting as agents of delivery within the IP-SSJ. What is also clear is that DFID experienced significant difficulties executing their programme, albeit part of the problem was caused by a change in local and DFID priorities resulting from the 2015 earthquake. However, to an extent, it would appear that DFID's issues in driving their programme were partly of their own making in that DFID sought to implement a complex programme, without the benefit of a whole-of-government approach in a political climate that was not conducive to the transformation objectives of DFID. That DFID continued to drive the programme, arguably without the necessary experience or established relationships, may well have contributed to then slow rate of uptake and the need to extend the programme in both time and resources. That is the second key issue that emerges: without local governments or elites buying into the donor programme there is less chance of success. Fundamentally, political objectives had not been aligned.

7.6.3 An experimental approach without the conditions or resources to deliver

On upstream conflict prevention DFID had moved away from institutional police reform that was cancelled in 2012. It was replaced by a complex security and justice programme that was underpinned by normative scholarly research not empirical evidence. This approach was innovative and arguably experimental, and it was undertaken in a climate of limited influence and cooperation with Nepali institutions and without the skilled resources that come with a whole-of-government approach.

[127] A term coined by Brodkin (2012) to describe how policy delivery also occurs through non-profit organisations, for-profit firms, and mixed public-private arrangements.

The UK government, and specifically DFID, experienced difficulties in its flagship conflict prevention policy in Nepal due to the complexity of the transformation programme, driven at too low a level and by an approach that lacked a joint approach with agreed goals. Nor were there the skills available at a sufficiently experienced level to execute a multi-stakeholder, strategic to local-level programme. DFID arguably bit off much more than it could chew, albeit part of the problem caused by a change in local and DFID priorities resulting from the 2015 earthquake. But DFID's issues were partly of their own making – in that DFID sought to implement a complex programme, without the benefit of a whole-of-government approach, in a political climate that was not conducive to this complex programme.

Outcomes are still evolving with extensions to timelines but, in the 2018 and 2020 annual reports (DFID, 2018, DFID, 2020), indications are of tactical successes rather than the strategic transformation offered by the 2012 Business Case. This is unsurprising and realistic but did not reflect the original objects, costs or timeframe. The issue for this thesis was the lack of clear Whitehall policy, scrutiny and involvement that contributed to a complex programme going forward without the conditions necessary to reduce the risks and deliver against objectives. An impression is left of an overly ambitions country team driven transformational programme with insufficient government-to-government buy-in and political drive behind the programme. This was more muddling through not even based on empirically derived policy; it was risk taking without the risks mitigated. There was neither a clear window of opportunity for the programme nor a coherent policy or strategy to implement it.

Chapter 8 – Conflict prevention: concepts but not practice

8.1 Introduction

Using interviews with politicians, their special advisors, senior civil servants and development consultants, this chapter addresses the wider issue of why a major donor like the UK, with a clear political intent, still struggled to make headway in developing its role in structural conflict prevention. This examination is set against the broad upstream goals set out in BSOS. This chapter brings together issues identified in previous chapters among strategic intent, policy development and the actions of departments examined in the policy implementation studies to get to the heart of the subtle difference between conflict prevention and statebuilding and why upstream did not make any substantive progress.

This chapter examines in more detail the effect of a broken linkage among political intent, government and departmental policy development and the process of supporting conflict prevention through actions that influence, assistance and/or delivery capability or services, all of which can contribute to conflict prevention. Drawing on themes that have repeatedly emerged in different forms throughout the thesis, this chapter addresses cross-cutting issues from the strategic to the local which directly answer the key thesis question of why the UK government has found it difficult to get upstream. These themes are: political strategic distraction, inter-departmental tensions and the limitations of a country team led approach. From these themes comes a clear picture of the impact of a disconnect between government political intent that was not followed through to policy development and execution with target state elites in either a positive/reinforcing or negative/cajoling way to drive forward an upstream conflict prevention agenda in a sustainable way.

8.2 Political strategic distraction

This section examines the impact of geostrategic importance, partnerships and cooperation on both the formulation and execution of policy. This section addresses issues from the strategic to the local and brings out the importance of really understanding the nature of conflict prevention and the difference between conflict prevention and statebuilding. Only by having a clear understanding of the difference can the same basic tools used for both be used effectively to support a conflict prevention agenda.

Baroness Helić suggested that conflict prevention policy did not have time to be embedded into the day-to-day practice of departments. Given the way departmental policy emerged in its normative form, it has been suggested in this thesis there was a failure to understand conflict prevention as a political process and therefore what needed to be done in order to turn political intent into practice. The academic literature also was pointing in the direction to the political nature of conflict prevention when, for example, Lund (1996) wrote of preventative diplomacy using political, socioeconomic and military means. More recently Ramsbotham et al. (2018) have reinforced this view with their focus on satisfying needs, accommodating legitimate aspirations and remedying injustices. The signposts were in place for policy development but as has been seen it was not translated into policy that could be operationalised in South Sudan or Nepal. Again, Helić suggested that it needed foreign policy aficionados, who understood conflict prevention, to really bring the three departments together in a whole-of-government approach. This could only come from the top and from the NSC. Mitchell claimed that DFID's voice was heard on upstream and

certainly during the discussions on the Strategic Defence Review. This is a key point; upstream seemed to matter to Mitchell where it was in the UK's strategic interests. Indeed, the way upstream was presented in BSOS, as the third pillar of policy rather than following on from the "early warning pillar" and before the "rapid crisis prevention and response" pillar, seems to indicate more of a doctrinal coherence covering all the spectrum of responses within the government's strategy. But upstream did not gain any traction thereafter.

8.2.1 Geostrategic importance matters: South Sudan and Nepal did not feature

The analysis of the policy implementation studies shows that the UK, while recognising the benefits of early conflict prevention, did not have the ability, in terms of political effort and a coordinated inter-departmental approach, to conduct effective long-term upstream structural conflict prevention in the policy implementation studies examined or elsewhere[128]. This thesis has addressed criticisms of the UK government's strategic approach to international assistance and intervention. Strategic thinking and subsequent action requires a long-term vision and strong leadership. It also requires continuity of action which establishes working partnerships both with international partners and elites. However, the policy analysis and the policy implementation studies illustrate that the leadership and vision were not there. Despite the intent by the Coalition government, the focus on the immediate and the Arab Spring meant that the opportunity for upstream conflict prevention was lost. There was no political effort to look wider afield to those global areas that might have benefited from structural conflict prevention. The UK was too focused on its on geostrategic security issues and ongoing entanglements. The New Deal signed by Mitchell in 2011 and resulting in the partnering with South Sudan made little impact. Four years after Busan, the OECD was arguing that "so far, however, New Deal implementation has only been partial. Political commitment is needed on all sides to build momentum and real change" (OECD, 2015b, p26).

But there was also intervention fatigue in the UK after the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. Baroness Helić commented that "anything where we stay longer than two or three years, God forbid ten years, is mission creep; even by people who don't know what it stands for, they call it mission creep" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1). Although she was commenting on intervention in the round, her comments demonstrate the short termism in strategic thinking. This point is reinforced by Lord Rickets[129] in a lecture on the *Lost Art of Strategic Thinking* (Ricketts, 2019). Lord Ricketts considered the nature of current politics and suggests that the forces of a digital age tend to pull political leaders towards a short-term crisis management agenda of direct impact to the UK's security[130]. Commenting on government and strategic development, Lord Ricketts argues that the pressures today make it very hard for governments to "base what they do as well as what they say on careful thinking about longer term consequences of the options" (Ricketts, 2019, p4). "The tyranny of the immediate" (Ricketts, 2019, p6) and the relentless 24/7 media cycle, he argued, significantly impacted the ability of politicians and officials to think strategically.

Linking to the WB study on the length of time it takes to develop institutions, it is the nature of internal conflict that it can bubble away quietly and then explode. To counter this by its very nature upstream structural conflict prevention is a long-term endeavour ideally

[128] This assessment is based on the analysis of departmental policy and Hansard.
[129] Permanent Secretary FCO 2006–10; National Security Advisor 2010–12.
[130] Terrorism and uncontrolled migration.

jointly undertaken with allies and a local partner keen to avoid violence in their own country. But the evidence of conflicts is that this is not the case and over time, the UK government's conflict prevention abilities in ex-colonies, many of which are characterised as fragile states and hence the target of the BSOS, have been significantly reduced. The UK government's political and military influence waned in relation to the internal politics of many ex-colonies and newly formed states. Moreover, the UK's political and military interests have moved elsewhere (e.g. Europe, global terrorism, global trade). Without diverging too far, it is suggested that, in the context of conflict prevention, this has resulted in two related key points: a failure of strategic thinking and a focus on the "immediate". This theme was taken up by Baroness Helić in interview; she commented that there was a golden opportunity after the Balkan Wars for talking about preventative diplomacy, but that opportunity passed. Based on discussions with Lord Ricketts[131] (Interview No 28, 2019, p1) and Baroness Helić (Interview No 29, 2019, p1), there is evidence that after 2008 the opportunity for upstream was lost and, as the Coalition government came to power, the Arab Spring captured their attention and there was no capacity in government for their lower priority upstream target states. Baroness Helić commented that the government got "caught in a massive upheaval" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1) that prevented it from focusing on anything but the immediate. That the Coalition government, or following Conservative government, did not return to upstream is also related to the impact of the 'immediate' as Brexit took centre stage. The impact on the two policy implementation studies was clear. In Nepal the UK government had no interest and it was left to a small FCO embassy team that itself was constantly changing and a DFID team, at the other end of the Kathmandu, focused on its core business but also attempting to conduct statebuilding activities that also had overtones of conflict prevention. This was in the face of regional powers seeking to dominate the international agenda. As for Sudan/South Sudan, the focus was on the Darfur, the CPA and the threat of terrorism. There was no interest in South Sudan beyond early ministerial interventions associated with the move to independence given the position of the UK as one of the Troika states.

The country teams therefore were making policy and executing policy. They were doing the best they could with the resources available. Referencing the indicators of policy development in Table 3.2, from a theoretical perspective one might argue that what was happening in South Sudan and Nepal were examples of problems identified resulting in politics and policies coming together to deliver solutions, albeit at a local rather than strategic level. However, in both cases, in the absence of NSC involvement, this was more muddling through. In Nepal there was no real consensus with the local elites on the nature of the security and justice approach adopted by UK officials. As for South Sudan the elites were driving to a very different agenda. In South Sudan Mahmood Mamdani[132] was a highly critical voice of the international community and the Troika. Commenting on who should be held responsible for the extreme violence that occurred after 2013 in South Sudan, he pointed the finger firmly at the Troika and IGAD for "their decisive role in framing an agreement that set up politically unchallenged armed power in South Sudan" (Mamdani, 2016, p11) and the "pre-2013 cabinet of Government of South Sudan for the political crisis that led to the melt down" (Mamdani, 2016, p11); this was fundamentally a failure of politics. Thinking strategically and acting strategically cannot just be left to officials alone, particularly with a new policy area like structural conflict prevention. If a strategic approach

[131] Email exchange with Lord Ricketts.
[132] An authoritative African voice, Mahmood Mamdani is the director of the Institute of Social Research at Makerere University.

to conflict prevention was to emerge, it would have taken more direct involvement and direction from ministers to direct the ends, ways and means and not just leave it to a general policy statement on structural conflict prevention and expect officials to take the agenda forward.

8.2.2 The impact of a lack of effective partnerships/coordination

Partnerships and coordinated action are key to effective conflict prevention. However, the analysis in the policy chapters and policy implementation studies indicates failings of partnerships and coordination at many levels. At a UK government level, despite a public rhetoric presented to, for example, Parliamentary committees, the UK government was not well connected with elites in South Sudan or Nepal on issues directly related to conflict prevention or statebuilding. Nor were the UK government's departments working effectively together as upstream was too far down the priority of individual departments. But nor was there effective partnering between the international community/UK government and local elites on conflict prevention; indeed, it is clear from the policy implementation studies that local elites in both South Sudan and Nepal had different agendas to the UK government and the international community.

Ramos-Horta (Ramos-Horta, 2019, p1) argues that the key to conflict prevention is leadership[133], particularly at the community, sub-national and national levels. In both pre- and post-conflict prevention the international community may at times be a significant actor, but it is the local that will sustain peace or prevent a descent into violence. As such, the international community is well versed in establishing predominantly loose and informal partnerships in order to work together towards common goals in various target countries; albeit predominantly intervening as violence increases or in the aftermath of violence. In both Nepal and South Sudan there was clear evidence of how the international community sought to work together. The focus was both to make best use of resources on the ground and to drive forward an agenda for development in its widest sense incorporating poverty reduction, peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict prevention. In South Sudan there was the Troika which was primarily a political effort focused on the North-South conflict. This political activity did not extend to wider peace and statebuilding activities in the south. The international community were also focused on Darfur. Hence, there were three separate crises in the same region. DFID did play an important part with the UN in South Sudan in helping to coordinate international community support to the emerging new state prior to there being donor embassies in Juba. In Nepal too there is clear evidence of donor coordination and here the UN played a central role in developing strategies with the Government of Nepal. DFID clearly worked closely with the UN Coordinator and this is evident in both the way DFID and the UN were involved in each other's programmes and projects.

However, partnerships within the international community, let alone with a struggling government, are far from straightforward. There are a range of issues both political and technical to overcome within the international community and then with the government of a struggling state. But, partnerships within the international community take time to develop for each new situation. Partnerships are required to varying degrees, and dependent on the level of cooperation and coordination, the alignment of goals, milestones, finance, financial

[133] See further analysis in Chapter 9.

approvals, contracting and implementing partners. Partnerships between donor and recipient governments are also far from straightforward. The two policy implementation studies have focused on situations of states emerging from conflict but also at risk of returning to violent conflict. Nepal was emerging from civil war and the international community was keen to play a part in preventing a return to violence. In interviews there is strong evidence of how the Nepali elites were determined to maintain the international community at arms-length and engaged on their own terms. This comes through in relation to DFID's attempt drive through the execution of an important gender violence programme that had overtones of a societal social transformation programme that impacted police structures and ways of working. This programme was made more difficult by not having relationships in place with a common view of outcomes. That is not to suggest that actions should only be attempted when there is broad agreement with parties; sometimes a negative/cajoling approach is also necessary. However, in the case of Nepal the programme risks that had been identified in DFID's project documentation and annual reviews had not been mitigated. As for South Sudan, the implementation of the CPA was the culmination of a political process to avert violent conflict. While there was a recognition that South Sudan required support to establish itself as a nation-state, the internal tensions in the South were not sufficiently recognised as a threat to stability. Chapter 6 commented on how Mitchell had agreed to the UK government partnering with South Sudan under the New Deal pilot process. But government-to-government partnering on shared objectives is an intensive activity that requires a high degree of political capital over time to sustain the effort. This was not achieved in South Sudan. In both policy implementation studies there was a tendency for local UK officials/contractors to drive on despite the clear indicators that the policy objectives were in trouble. From these examples the issue for a general policy approach to conflict prevention (and statebuilding) is that without the relationships being right, significant effort (and resources) were wasted by UK officials (and contractors) at the local level. If challenging objectives are not agreed at a local level, then it requires effective engagement with elites to create the conditions – or think again as to how to assist. But it is not enough to just rely on political touch-points between elites, as happened in South Sudan with the visits of Hague and Mitchell.

Commenting on the exercise of power in government, and in the case of achieving a whole-of-government approach to building stability, Baroness Helić comments that it requires the intervention of a Prime Minister. Baroness Helić commented that "the only person who has the power is a strong Foreign Secretary who has got the support of the Prime Minister. If you don't have that then you can kiss goodbye to your policy" (Interview No 29, 2019, p1). But neither South Sudan nor Nepal enjoyed the level of attention that Sierra Leone received. The impact could be seen in the way that one interviewee was adamant that Nepal was not a whole-of-government issue; therefore, not attracting the resources that might have been available. Neither South Sudan nor Nepal had the benefit of the personal involvement of senior politicians to influence the direction of travel. Sierra Leone is often cited as an example of such interventions, as at the time of intervention, departments and those on the ground[134] benefitted from the direct interest of Tony Blair and Claire Short and their engagement with President Kabbah. This significantly impacted the ability of those on the ground conducting technical programmes to set agreed targets. The key issue is that technical projects must be established within a wider bilateral (or multilateral) political

[134] In 2003 I was developing the IMATT Sierra Leone strategy to support the development of the Sierra Leone armed forces.

dialogue that agrees and drives the way forward in line with the tenants of the New Deal. This was absent in both policy implementation studies and efforts were left to local often junior officials or contractors.

But, maintaining this focus and partnership is difficult and still Sierra Leone was to become, according to OECD, an aid orphan, as political interest within Whitehall waned and higher priority conflicts (Iraq, Afghanistan, MENA/Arab Spring) took hold. As has been argued in Chapters 6 and 7, there was little political weight behind the mainly DFID efforts in South Sudan and Nepal. Neither of these states represented a threat to UK security and there is much evidence to indicate that it was UK security, not benevolent support, that focuses the mind of politicians. Nor did either South Sudan or Nepal really benefit from partnering with the UK government and its departments in a coordinated way. Despite Mitchell's signing up to the New Deal and partnering with South Sudan, this had little impact in the short term. However, of more concern, is that the UK government and departments sometimes suggest that there is a level of coordination, cooperation and partnering that is just not borne out by the evidence. Whole-of-government seems to happen when the NSC (or Prime Minister) is directing events; and this was not the case for conflict prevention.

Remaining with politics, there is also another strategic issue that impacts the degree to which the UK government can support structural conflict prevention with a target partner government – the impact of wider geopolitics. The drivers of geopolitics in the policy implementation studies are quite different. In Nepal it is the influence of China and India driven by their own strategic security issues. A recent UK government report (Stabilisation Unit, 2018a) on elite bargains in Nepal hints at the way in which India, for both domestic and regional reasons, takes a keen interest the international development and security agenda in Nepal and was influential in preventing an extension to the UN mandate in Nepal. In South Sudan regional geopolitics were less of an issue for other African nations, but there was strategic geopolitical interest in South Sudan focused on the oil wealth in the south. Certainly, this was the driver of China's strategy for stability and it was a major contributor to the UN mission. According to Bellingham's evidence to the House of Lords, the UK government's strategy for supporting the South was also based on economic development and trade missions were attempted. Oil wealth was the root of the South Sudan local conflict but resolving this conflict was not sufficient for the international community/UK government to engage politically to address underlying tensions.

Finally, in terms of creating the conditions for effective partnering it is worth mentioning the role of interlocutors as an important factor in partnering and cooperation, both at the political and technical levels. This research has not had the access required to fully address the issue but the importance of an interlocutor is clear as shown by UK's own history with Senator George Mitchell and General de Chastelain regarding Northern Ireland. But interlocutors seem not to have been emphasised much in the academic literature or departmental doctrine and practitioners' handbooks produced by UK departments. Yet Ramos-Horta cites the work of a Norwegian Lutheran bishop (Dr. Gunnar Stålsett) who quietly brought "together civil society, and only when the process was mature, he talked with the government to take over. But, it was started by individuals" (Ramos-Horta, 2019).

In the case of South Sudan there were comments from interviewees that an African political interlocutor might have been able to head off the 2013 civil war but there was just too much focus on the North-South issue even within the African Union. It is worth noting

that in 2018, President al-Bashir (President of Sudan and one-time enemy of the South) and President Museveni (President of Uganda), both with political and security interests in South Sudan, brokered an accord between the internal South Sudan factions. Although commending the actions of IGAD[135], al-Bashir, and Museveni, the International Crisis Group also laments the absence of a strong interlocutor able to drive the peace process that western states would then back (International Crisis Group, 2019). Also, in their South Sudan elite policy implementation study, the Stabilisation Unit study notes that the Troika and the UN were bound to the CPA's framework and ignored the Juba Declaration which had no international support. Furthermore, the Stabilisation Unit study noted that the Juba Declaration, a key agreement to future peace in the South, had "no international support", which left the international community free to be "more critical of the parties and their behaviour … but failed to take any political risk to support the SSDF-SPLA relationship" (Stabilisation Unit, 2018b, p21). Noting that the international community were nervous about challenging the provisions of the CPA, which excluded the SSDF, it is unsurprising that the international community did not engage in peacebuilding and stratebuilding within the South. As Hillary Benn comments, "it was always pretty clear that South Sudan would vote for independence when the chance came, only for the new country to descend into a conflict between two leaders each of whom thought they should be in charge" and "there is only so much that outside governments can do – even with a good strategy – if the parties to a conflict want to keep going" (Interview No 23, 2019, p1). As for Nepal, evidence was found for interlocutors working at an issue level (for example Professor Jackson on SSR); however, there did not appear to be an international interlocutor at the strategic level other than the UN Coordinator for a limited period.

The issue of the role of interlocutors with a long-term[136] commitment in conflict prevention requires more attention in Western approaches. Indeed, the case of Dr. Gunnar Stålsett and his work in Guatemala demonstrates that conflict prevention can be initiated and driven upwards from the grass roots, but it requires the right leadership and clarity of thinking and objectives. Again, this issue warrants more research. Overall, the evidence suggests that a whole-of-government approach to upstream was not emerging either top down or in any coherent way bottom up. However, the basic principles in upstream were sound if not followed through. One of the most important lessons emerging from South Sudan, and relevant to Nepal, is that without substantive political engagement, pressure and ultimately local political intent by elites to address a conflict prevention agenda amongst themselves it is argued that technical, sometimes templated strategies, programmes and projects will struggle to have effect.

8.3 Inter-departmental objectives and competition

The BSOS did not provide a unifying purpose for departments although it did initially emerge as a document from an inter-departmental working group. That it was presented to Parliament as government strategy is itself a success. There is no doubt that BSOS did have impact having been debated in both Houses in Parliament and quoted in numerous policy and other official documents and reports. While it seems to have lost its currency around 2013, it remains extant, albeit it has been suggested that this is more to do with getting inter-departmental agreement on what should replace it.

[135] The regional organization for economic and political development.
[136] Senator George Mitchell was involved in the Northern Ireland peace process from 1995–2003 and handed over the role after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

If BSOS achieved SofS-level endorsement, there is no evidence that those same individuals took ownership of upstream conflict prevention pillar. One contractor interviewee noted that "it [the BSOS] was required reading" for Stabilisation Unit consultants although "subsequent experience showed that few other civil servants seemed to have read it other than for the purposes of quoting it as an authority" (Interview No 24, 2019). From a strategic policy perspective the upstream pillar remains extant policy, albeit in deep hibernation. During the coalition government, departments had their own specific objectives and there was nothing to unify them around upstream. It was commented by a FCO official that "its core pillars … delivered through a whole of government effort … remains valid, though now incorporated into the wider FUSION[137] approach" (Interview No 26, 2019, p1). The official remarked that "I have been an avid consumer of it through the years … in the National Security Secretariat of the Cabinet Office" on developing a more coherent cross-government approach to countries at risk of instability "which resulted in the formation of the Conflict Stability and Security Fund and one-UK government country/region strategies for those countries" (Interview No 26, 2019). Another interviewee remarked that "it was a stepping stone to where we are now" (Interview No 17, 2018, p1). However, there is no strong evidence to suggest that the upstream pillar got traction then, or now; it appears that it was (and perhaps is) the rapid crisis response pillar that has been the focus.

upstream did not get taken forward as all the indications are that it fell by the wayside during the Coalition government and has yet to recover in policy terms, let alone execution. Baroness Helić was clear that upstream was not embedded into departmental thinking and, using the indicators in Table 3.2 from a policy theory perspective, there has not been a window of opportunity since 2011 to return to this agenda. This indicates that the way forward it likely to continue to be a degree of muddling through that has more in common with a statebuilding approach than conflict prevention. But nor was upstream a rejection of the previous Labour government approach to humanitarian interventions. Again, Baroness Helić's view was that there was a higher intent driving the Coalition government, predominantly from the office of Lord Hague. Baroness Helić commented that there was no rejection of the thinking behind liberal humanitarianism, rather there was a view that intervention could be done earlier and better. She comments that:

> It was not that there was a rejection of Tony Blair's humanitarian intervention but there was a realisation that you don't even have to intervene for humanitarian intervention if you intervene in the upstream way (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

But this raises another issue: who leads on political engagement and what level of political engagement is required to be effective? When challenged that departments were in no position to drive upstream, Baroness Helić only partially agreed. She commented:

> Yes, and no. Yes, because for everything that ever happens you need a strong political leadership, and no, it is not the only thing. If it is well understood by the officials, when they do their submissions, they will flag up certain issues to

[137] FUSION doctrine was the post 2015 Conservative government approach to integrating NSC priorities. It creates a more accountable system to support collective Cabinet decision making, with the introduction of senior officials as senior responsible owners to deliver each of the NSC's priorities.

> the ministers and they will say you can do it the following way (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

But, given the tyranny of the immediate there was a failure to think strategically about structural conflict prevention and what it might really mean. Also, long-term strategic issues suffer from the short termism of departmental budgets and three- to five-year country plans. One government minister, Rory Stewart, took the view that the problem was compounded by the failure of departmental understanding of the reality on the ground that does not result in effective policy development. But, in the case of upstream it is argued that policy was insufficiently mature for departments to take the initiative in the absence of ministerial direction. Indeed, conflict prevention as a term has a very imprecise meaning which means that converting it into the ways and means of making it happen is not so obvious either. Indeed, by 2012 the Coalition political intent to drive further upstream was not sufficiently embedded in departmental thinking as to what it meant for policy let alone emerging practice. Again, Baroness Helić comments:

> … your policies have to be embedded but not only on paper, they have to be embedded in practice, and I don't think it got embedded into practice (Interview No 29, 2019, p1).

It is argued that structural conflict prevention was not even clear on paper and hence there was no chance of it emerging into clear policy. Discussing conflict prevention, another interviewee who worked on policy development commented that working in Whitehall it was evident that there was a "gulf between Whitehall and Westminster" (Interview No 22, 2019, p1) which is borne out in this research.

At the departmental level, the FCO, a relatively small department, was severely handicapped by the impact of the post-2008 government austerity budgets and the Arab Spring. Hence the FCO was not well placed to lead an in-country UK government strategic approach to conflict prevention and peace building. In South Sudan, it has already been suggested by the FCO's Special Representative that South Sudan was a lower priority than the Darfur issue; his own staff had been much reduced due to the FCO's Arab Spring needs just at the time when more effort was required. It was clearly stated by two well-placed interviewees that, after the initial flurry of activity around independence, Hague and Mitchel were more focused on other issues. As for Nepal, again the case for a lack of political analysis has been put forward by a number of the interviewees; this was not helped by the lack of continuity of key UK officials and the lack of a whole-of-government approach. Overall, DFID very much remained in their core business areas through a technical programmes and projects approach. However, one DFID interviewee rejected the view that DFID was a programme and project organisation and argued that DFID does act politically; but it was agreed that DFID's approach to "reconciliation is the great failure" (Interview No 25, 2019). There was also evidence of conflicts between departments.

There were suggestions that, with austerity impacting its resource budget, the FCO wanted to get access or control of DFID's budget. At a country level there was a conflict within the FCO (between the Khartoum and Juba embassies) and between the FCO/MOD and DFID on the way forward for actions in South Sudan. Also, there was some evidence of tensions at a country level in Nepal. Evidence from the Head of DFID Nepal, noted that it was not unusual, given the budget, for the Head of DFID in country to be of the same seniority or more senior to the ambassador; there was evidence of protecting turf rather than

whole-of-government. Although, on this last point, there were also suggestions that there is a new breed of officials coming through the system. It was suggested that, with the experience of the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, officials with a wider view of their role was resulting in a more whole-of-government approach; that needs more investigation.

Overall, policy had not been embedded into ministries nor was leadership coming from the Cabinet. Ministries were still driving to their own agendas, and as for fragile states the new measure of success had become the 0.7 per cent of GDP which had its own effect on behaviour. DFID, which had much of the lead at the departmental level, was conducting research into conflict prevention as there was no effective conflict prevention policy upon which to draw. After all, from an incremental policy development approach (Table 3.2) there was no experience from which to learn lessons and academic research was also thin on the operationalisation of the frameworks of conflict prevention. Nor are there indicators of new ideas and problems coming together (Table 3.2). There is no evidence of clear policy ideas coming through from academia or elsewhere to influence the political process in the short window of opportunity that opened for structural conflict prevention. In all there was a continuation of the muddling through at a local level with a clear overlap between statebuilding activities and conflict prevention. But, the SSR, justice and security themes addressed in South Sudan and Nepal tended very much towards statebuilding activities with very limited success. The key missing ingredient was the intent to specifically address the drivers of conflict both by the UK and local elites. In the UK structural conflict prevention was not sufficiently well understood as a separate action to statebuilding and hence the upstream pillar of the BSOS tends towards statebuilding.

8.4 The limitations of a country team led approach

This section focuses on the how, in the absence of clear Whitehall conflict prevention policy and strategy, the result is a predominantly UK statebuilding agenda that also addresses, or seeks to address, drivers of conflict. However, in both policy implementation studies there were limitations in the approach that impacted both the statebuilding and conflict prevention agendas. In addition, in the policy implementation of Nepal, policy was being designed and executed at the local level with limited input from Whitehall.

After Busan the New Deal and the IDPS Goals were to form a new framework that was to set the standard and principles of engagement between countries and organisations. Three of the goals[138] of the New Deal have specific relevance to structural conflict prevention. Yet the overall impression gained during this research is that the output of Busan and the IDPS goals did not impact greatly on policy nor on UK Whitehall officials. One senior Stabilisation Unit official noted that he was unaware of either Busan or the IDPS goals "which tells you quite a lot" (Interview No 10, 2017, p1). As noted earlier, it was the view of the OECD that more political commitment was needed on all sides to build momentum and real change. However, funding tends to attract the attention of politicians and officials in donor-targeted states, and, relative to other donors, the UK was a large funder in both South Sudan and Nepal. If funds are available then local officials, elites and INGOs/NGOs will seek to make use of those funds. The issue is whether the funds are used to good effect.

[138] Legitimate politics; security and justice.

At a country level, UK officials (and contractors tasked with programme management[139]) were seeking to develop and deliver their strategies and programmes. In both South Sudan and Nepal there was a focus on SSR but with far less resources than that applied to Sierra Leone where the problem was significantly more straightforward. In Nepal there was the rolling out of a complex societal transformational security and justice programme that seems to be a favoured approach by DFID/Whitehall that later was criticised by the ICAI[140] for the lack of a DFID strategy in Whitehall and a lack of adaption to local circumstances. In South Sudan, unlike Nepal, while there was attempts to put together a coherent strategic approach to local SSR programme, it was "opposed by programme management in DFID" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1), who were concerned about the rising scale of violence and therefore the UK's association with it. In Nepal the security and justice programme was being driven by the local DFID team whereas in South Sudan the SSR programme was being designed in Whitehall and subsequently let out as a contract for implementation. But overall, the development of the UK's policy, strategy and detailed implementation plans was left to relatively junior officials – the street bureaucrats (see Table 3.2) who had to fight for their programmes and projects. But this was problematic as: there was a tendency to template solutions (see below); the solutions on offer were not what was desired locally and the resources available were insufficient for the task. This was at a time of increased public scrutiny coming with the commitment to 0.7 per cent spending on aid at a time of austerity in the UK.

The evidence from both South Sudan and Nepal is of a conflict prevention approach that was broadly technical – programmes and projects. Lessons from past interventions had been captured for SSR and, for the MOD, turned into doctrine. The Stabilisation Unit was issuing it *What Works* series, including one on policing assistance issued in 2014 (2014b), while DFID was developing its own approaches and rolling out a security and justice programme which had been developed based on a DFID view of an integrated approach to justice and security. Hence, there was a tendency by officials to take "off-the-shelf solutions" developed from lessons in other countries and situations as "templates" for how they should seek to implement their programmes locally. But in both policy implementation studies it was apparent that South Sudan and Nepal were low priority for Whitehall. Neither of these policy implementation studies, despite being relatively high on the list for UK financial aid, attracted the attention of the human resources required to drive in successful programmes in challenging circumstances – even if those programmes had been wanted locally in the form offered (see below).

8.4.1 'Off-the-shelf programme templates'

Departments use off-the-shelf templates either as a starting point or as the basis of an engagement with a new problem. Off-the-shelf templates are based on lessons and experience and can be rolled out as departments believe it is the right thing to do (this issue will be returned to). But in the case of conflict prevention there was no doctrine, nor lessons learned from past upstream structural conflict prevention efforts, thus there were no templates of how officials should approach situations like Nepal or South Sudan. However, DFID, the MOD and the Stabilisation Unit had developed various publications on their experiences of statebuilding – the templates for officials. But implementing such templates

[139] As with the SSR programme in South Sudan.
[140] Section 7.4.3

if far from straightforward. For example, despite issuing a *What Works* note on policing there is evidence to suggest that notwithstanding the rhetoric the reality of UK's approach was very different.

Maureen Brown (2016) and Stephanie Blair[141] (2016, Interview No 21, 2019) explored the UK government's approach to police SSR in in general. They took the view that:

> [the] UK appears to be making a cautious return to international policing after a decade following an approach best described as "muddling through" (Blair and Brown, 2016, p65).

Referencing the BSOS, Blair and Brown are critical of the UK's efforts notwithstanding government international development and security strategies; they suggest that:

> [the] UK had neither the political will nor the necessary resources required to make meaningful contributions to international policing (Blair and Brown, 2016, p65).

They quote UK police officers deployed on international operations falling from 230 serving police officers involved in UN operations in 2000, falling to 53 in 2011 after Afghanistan and down to 13 in 2015. This fall is an indicator of the lack of effort being applied on a whole-of-government basis notwithstanding the political rhetoric at the time; austerity in the UK was impacting Chief Constables and their willingness to release serving officers. As for the MOD, there was a belated entry into South Sudan after Iraq and Afghanistan with the contribution to UNMISS, albeit logistic support rather than the badly needed experienced combat capability. There were indications that this was a political not military decision – but this was not confirmed. Unlike Sierra Leone, once again the MOD did not get involved with the SSR programme, preferring to leave that task to ex-military contractors. In Nepal there was no real MOD engagement in upstream at all.

8.4.2 Implementing templated approaches is problematic

With no significant Whitehall engagement, translating high-level political intent into upstream action in Nepal was predominantly left for DFID and a contractor-led programme (ex-MOD consultant with SSR experience) in South Sudan. At least in South Sudan, unlike Nepal, the embassy team were trying to engage Whitehall on a whole-of-government basis to develop a more strategic approach; but there was "little coherent direction from Whitehall at any time and no political appetite to engage or support the British Embassy on the ground" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1). At a local level in both cases the resources available were insufficient for the objectives set out in the respective business case. Despite assertions in BSOS that more resources would be focused on upstream with implications for the 1,000 strong pool of civilian experts, evidence from the policy implementation studies indicates that there was no real change in approach and technical projects were being executed on a templated approach and with limited reference to the New Deal that had been signed by Andrew Mitchell at Busan in 2011. Also, the 2014 Stabilisation Unit Business Plan shows little evidence of upstream intent with both Nepal and South Sudan listed as low priority; and by 2019 the Stabilisation Unit's doctrine note had firmly placed itself outside of longer

[141] A former UK Chief Police officer and an NGO director respectively.

term upstream peacebuilding and statebuilding. In South Sudan, unlike the MOD team in Sierra Leone under a serving UK brigadier, it was left to a contractor-led approach. In Nepal there was minimal support from the Stabilisation Unit police resources – as it was a "a DFID, and a DFID alone programme" (Interview No 20, 2018, p1), not a whole-of-government approach. The efforts that were made in statebuilding/conflict prevention at a local level were without a doubt well-meaning but they were driven by a UK-templated view of what should happen and not based on a joint aspiration with local elites to build capability and reduce local tensions. Drawing on the issues raised by Dolowitz and Marsh in their review of the policy transfer literature in both cases, there were flaws with the policy transfer objectives of the Coalition government, let alone any resultant significant contribution to structural conflict prevention.

Jose Ramos-Horta[142] cited South Sudan (Ramos-Horta, 2019, p1) as one of the conflicts where the international community had not picked up on, let alone addressed, the internal conflicts which led to the 2013 civil war. With no UK embassy in place in Juba until after independence, and a Khartoum embassy that some argued was too distant and distracted by the North-South CPA and Darfur issues, it is unsurprising that the problematic politics of South Sudan was not on the horizon, let alone being addressed. However, once appointed in 2012 under MacPhail, and unlike Nepal, the South Sudan embassy team were trying to engage Whitehall on a whole-of-government basis but there was "little coherent direction from Whitehall at any time and no political appetite to engage or support the British Embassy on the ground" (Interview No 24, 2019, p1). However, the appointment of a defence attaché in South Sudan did seem to bring with it a degree of understanding and influence by the MOD. Two interviewees (Interview No 21, 2019, p21, Interview No 24, 2019, p1) commented on the influential soft power of the defence attaché in South Sudan, as so often it comes down to well-placed and experienced individuals and relationships that can be built up quickly. But in Nepal the defence attaché, by all accounts, just was not involved. However, as mentioned previously, the extent to which soft power was successful in South Sudan (or elsewhere) has not been possible to assess in this research. Nonetheless, there is evidence of a South Sudan country team approach that attempted to be whole-of-government, but this was not supported across Whitehall.

The DFID/Stabilisation Unit programme to assist the Government of South Sudan, to establish a functioning MOD (that was able command an integrated military made up of the factions) was seen as a necessary activity by the UK[143]. However, this was not what was wanted by the SPLA:

> … the SPLA were firmly against a MOD; they wanted a GHQ that would control everything …. For the [South Sudan] Government, for Salva Kia, he was a bit more ambivalent as he wanted to bring into the army all these disparate guerrilla groups and so he was concerned for transformation into a regular army …. So the government was at best ambivalent (Interview No 24, 2019, p1).

But this was a UK-templated approach without the explicit commitment of key stakeholders. Despite good working relationships between the UK ex-military and the South Sudanese, the programme was not a success as demonstrated in the policy implementation study.

[142]PM East Timor; Chair - UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations 2014

[143] The standard UK approach to strategic level SSR was to push for a joint political, civil service military MOD.

DFID's own project report records that "the Government of South Sudan's leadership is not yet sufficiently stable in political terms for this work to be carried out in full partnership between the UK Government and the Government of South Sudan" (DFID, 2014c, p5). However, this is the type of high-level bilateral negotiation that should have created the conditions for the programme. As it was, this programme was to cost the taxpayer £3.8m; a very small number in the macro sense of a £12b DFID budget, but not in relation to public opinion during austerity (equivalent to the running cost of a hospital ward or primary school). Also, despite the UK's influential position as one of the Troika states, the MOD was unwilling or unable to commit serving officers to a strong military advisory team as had been the case in Sierra Leone. While the team deployed clearly had military credibility with South Sudan elites[144], it is argued that the influence of retired officers will never be the same as having serving military with the authority of the UK government. The UK contractors were constrained by what had been contracted for them to deliver in South Sudan, and despite seeking to develop a more coherent strategy with MacPhail at the Juba embassy, there was no support for this in Whitehall. Then the window of opportunity closed with the civil war.

In Nepal it was all very much left to the local DFID country team. While there may have been a sound case for seeking to address security and justice in Nepal, DFID's own reports indicate that the programme struggled from the outset with a lack of stakeholder strategies, senior management engagement, specialist Stabilisation Unit skills and Nepali buy-in. Ghimire's (2017) academic study of SSR in Nepal raises issues that indicate a lack of clear strategic thinking and partnership with Nepal. Ghimire writes that unlike Sierra Leone and elsewhere:

> … it [the UK government] was not in a steering position in Nepal to drive SSR towards its own plan (Ghimire, 2017, p1426).

And given the complexities added in by the competing powers of China and India:

> Nepal's SSR reflected outcomes of a tripartite conflict of interests between elites, regional powers and great powers (Ghimire, 2017, p1426).

Nepal's DFID programme was very much a local programme; Sanyahumbi points out that there was no tension between the in-country team and DFID Whitehall. The DFID country team officials, in line with the indicators of policy theory (Table 3.2), were translating government intent into action. She recalled that:

> I don't remember there being tension there…. Partly because Nepal is a lower priority. You don't have the Whitehall spotlight on it. If you have the Whitehall spotlight on you then it is much, much harder to do anything and there is a lot more direction coming from Whitehall…. In Nepal,… it was 90% country led (Interview No 11, 2018, p1).

Sanyahumbi also commented that it is difficult and takes time with institutional reform and governance issues. Specifically, on police reform she commented that:

[144] Evidenced from DFID's own reports and interview with Dr Blair.

> … you have got to be invited. In order to do that and have any traction, they have got to invite you in and they have got to be open to it (Interview No 11, 2018, p1).

This is telling in relation to the way in which the DFID programme struggled to gain traction. But, Professor Jackson[145] commented that, far from being a coherent international response:

> … the international community at that time was a mess. No one trusted the Americans; no one trusted the Chinese, and no one trusted the Indians (Interview No 6, 2017, p1).

In this respect, Jackson commented that while India was Nepal's most important ally strategically, the UK was a trusted advisor. However, again echoing the concerns of Crozier, Canden and Watson, Jackson went on to comment on the UK's wider understanding stating that:

> The British have never really grasped the broader picture…. Whenever they have tried to do anything different to poverty, they have not been particularly brilliant at it; policing in particular. There have been several attempts to start big police programmes. They have all foundered on the basis that the relationship with the Home Minister has been appalling, or the people that they (the Nepali) have picked to lead the police have had terrible human rights records, which has happened at least twice. They [DFID] are starting again because the police is massively important in Nepal. There are some pretty good police officers, but as an institution it is pretty wretched (Interview No 6, 2017, p1).

Other interviewees reinforced this view of the lack of clarity on the UK government's objectives in partnership with the Nepali government. Again quoting one local NGO interviewee, "[DFID] are trying to figure out what is the problem they are going to address … they are offering a lot of solutions – but to do what?" (Interview No 18, 2018, p1). Nepal itself did not know what it wanted to achieve in terms of institutional transformation as there was still an ongoing debate about the nature of a federal state. Another interviewee, an INGO with a depth of experience in Nepal (and South Sudan), commented that part of the problem with DFID, and other donors working with the police, saw SSR as:

> "as something that they had to do" but they did not look at the "political settlement" and "what was possible for DFID to do and was achievable in that context" (Interview No 14, 2018, p1).

This was typical templating. Furthermore, it was commented that there was:

> … pressure to create programmes that push money out the door but things that would need to happen with the police are not that type of programmes necessarily. They try to build in training and equipment as a lever to get access … but the police are aware of these kinds of approaches (Interview No 14, 2018, p1).

[145] Professor Jackson University of Birmingham, brought in as an interlocutor on combatant integration.

But this was an approach that was to cost UK taxpayers £45.5m, a significant sum at a time of austerity. Linking to policy theory and Table 3.2, street-level bureaucrats, focused on their delivery objectives, can forget the opportunity cost of these projects to the taxpayer. Officials become focused on delivering against their targets and delivering their part in the 0.7 per cent government target which, to an extent, became the UK government's measure of success; this view was endorsed by a number of interviewees, including a DFID official (Interview No 25, 2019, p1).

DFID Nepal did have a strategic approach that was under constant review. Justice and SSR was a key part of the DFID Nepal strategy, hence the issue under review is the extent to which high-level strategy took account of the complex programming that would be required to tie police SSR into wider justice, access to justice and gender violence goals. It is worth noting at this point that over time DFID's approach to SSR had tended to morph into "Security and Justice" programming. One senior Whitehall source had commented that unhelpfully, from the mid-2000s onwards, DFID had taken over the security and justice work (Interview No 10, 2017, p1); giving the example of Sierra Leone, it was commented that the security and justice programme had become more about access to justice, and much less about developing police capacity. This was DFID defining the requirement and, in the case of Nepal, street-level bureaucrats seeking to translate policy into practical programmes and projects on the ground. Certainly, there was an issue to be addressed. The EU 2010 report on SSR in Nepal suggested that the security sector was poorly equipped to deal with the level of insecurity facing the population. The EU report had singled out the Nepal Police who lacked the personnel, training, infrastructure and lacked local trust due to politicisation of the security sector. This had resulted in a widespread gender-based violence that happened with impunity. If police response was a key part of the problem, International Alert had assessed that only four percent of projects focused on reform of the security sector. But, importantly the EU report noted that these were "stalled due to a lack of political consensus on the level of reform that is required, and the level of international community support that is needed to make this happen" (Crozier and Candan, 2010, p7). Crozier and Canden wrote that, on reform, the donor community should act together with local actors "to decide on their security priorities and to advocate for reforms that lead to genuine change on the ground" (Crozier and Candan, 2010, p8). Those tensions had not been addressed by the international community. Indeed, as was suggested by one local NGO deputy director (Interview No 18, 2018, p1) with reference to Nepal, milestones and indicators tended to be simplified and targets reduced due to the difficulties of implementation by partnering NGOs who have to demonstrate success if they are to continue. But still the UK street-level bureaucrats designed their programme, secured the funding through Whitehall and sought to implement the programme despite not mitigating the risks.

8.4.3 Political intent not followed through

To take forward upstream in a coherent whole-of-government approach was complex particularly with no effective NSC prioritisation. The process of bringing together upstream problems, coalitions and policies was necessary across a wide spectrum of agents, drawn from within the Coalition government, departments and supporting experts together with actors in the international community and actors in target states. Insufficient attention was paid to the challenges of upstream conflict prevention when the Coalition government issued its BSOS despite the well-trodden path of reported failures to prevent conflicts. The relative simplicity of the outline intent set out in the BSOS for upstream downplayed the significant challenges that lay ahead.

Without a clear political strategy from the UK government and engagement with the government and factions in South Sudan, it was always unlikely that, in this case, a technical project approach would have delivered an effective outcome. If a conflict prevention strategy, even partnered under the New Deal with the government and factions of South Sudan, was to emerge, then there needed to be a much stronger UK government political effort and leadership – which was absent. But, in the case of South Sudan it may well be that this engagement needed to have commenced significantly earlier under previous governments if relationships with South Sudan leaders were to have been sufficiently mature for UK politicians and diplomats to have had any real influence on events as they turned out.

In Nepal there is evidence of a long-standing country strategy that was being refreshed on a regular basis. There are also clear indications within the Nepal strategy and planning documents that preventing a return to conflict was uppermost in the minds of UK officials. The primary issue that emerges from Nepal is more linked to execution. The idea that policy works when there is a window of opportunity created with policies ready to be adopted does not seem to apply in the Nepal case. But what Nepal also brings out is that the window of opportunity is two-way. The policy implementation study suggests that, within the UK country team, the MOD were not engaged. The FCO team was too small, arguably the ambassadors were not staying long enough to have impact, and there was limited engagement between DFID and the FCO as they were physically separated at different ends of the city. Nepal also demonstrates some of the tensions within the UK's in-country team too; this impacted a whole-of-government approach at the country level particularly with respect to who should lead. A DFID Nepal country head commented that:

> I don't think you can have a whole-of-government approach lead by an ambassador – it depends on the ambassador – and you don't always have the right kind of ambassador. We had 60 staff, the Embassy had 10 maximum, so it made sense for us to lead on a lot of these things, but given the ambassador's role, and just to say I was the same grade as the ambassador in Nepal, so that creates its own tensions (Interview No 11, 2018, p1).

Clearly there are tensions and differences between the focus of departments in-country. However, this comment does indicate the tensions that exist and this ultimately impacts on the effectiveness of any whole-of-government approach.

This research did identify signs that there was a changing approach at a country level as officials with twenty years of experience of interventions rise to more senior posts. This bodes well for better inter-departmental cooperation should there be another window of opportunity in Whitehall for upstream. There were also indications that a more integrated political analysis is beginning to emerge in both Whitehall and at the local. In Nepal, helped by the recent co-location of UK officials in Kathmandu, there was evidence in interviews that a more whole-of-government political economy approach was emerging. Even with a more coherent in-country team approach, with an appropriate UK strategy, it is still reliant on the target government and elites being receptive to the ideas and values being advanced by the donor which was not the case in Nepal at the time.

Coalition building to support long-term structural conflict prevention is challenging, and the UK government officials are far from neutral interlocutors; they are framed by the

UK's values and standards of operating that might not impact a more independent interlocutor. The importance of partnership in the political process of transformation is paramount as is evidenced by all the recent frameworks and guidelines produced by the UK government and other donors. However, there was a reliance on a technical programme approaches, much driven by a need to meet a financial target of 0.7 per cent spend. While this had the potential to deliver lower-level capabilities and change, it has been shown to be of limited success and lacking in sustainability at delivering the strategic structural conflict prevention transformation required.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed three key issues to help explain why the UK, despite government intent, struggled to make headway in upstream structural conflict prevention. Previous chapters had identified a broken linkage between intent, policy development and the process of supporting a conflict prevention process in states at risk. What has become clear is that the political intent did not have time to be embedded into the day-to-day practice of departments. Where policy is well understood, for example the UK's core contribution to development aid (e.g. health, education), officials are well able to develop policy and execute government intent. But this was not the case with upstream structural conflict prevention; this was particularly so in countries that were not of strategic economic or security interest to the UK due to the tyranny of the immediate. Overall, policy was not embedded into ministries nor was there leadership coming from the Cabinet or NSC due to higher priority issues. But in departments there was still interest in what was happening in fragile states with the commitment to increase spending to 30 per cent of the aid budget by 2015 – and the new measure of success had become the 0.7 per cent of GDP.

With no Whitehall engagement in conflict prevention in South Sudan or Nepal, this left country teams to make and execute policy; as they were doing to a greater or lesser degree for other core areas (e.g. health, education). Teams on the ground were doing the best they could with the resources available. Theory might suggest that this was local officials identifying the problem and bringing that together with policies and politics and with the local elites. But from the policy implementation studies there is more evidence of local officials and consultants muddling through as they sought to develop and implement policies, programmes and projects – and in both cases examined without the explicit support of local elites. The BSOS upstream pillar had specifically identified security and justice and institutions, so it is unsurprising that departments (mainly DFID and the Stabilisation Unit through consultants) focused on programmes and projects based on previous statebuilding activities. But as either statebuilding or structural conflict prevention, the efforts examined there did not trigger sufficiently authoritative-level engagements between elites to create conditions for officials to execute effective supporting actions; it was left to the UK's local officials and contractors to do their best. The response therefore was a UK-templated approach without the explicit commitment of key stakeholders. Those UK officials were unable to drive through the normative policies that the UK officials had decided were appropriate for the time and circumstances. Despite those best efforts of individuals, and the assertions in BSOS that more resources would be focused on upstream with implications for the 1,000 strong pool of civilian experts, the evidence from the policy implementation studies suggests that, despite conflict prevention being primarily a political process, the UK approach was technical, tending towards statebuilding programmes and projects, without the politics of prevention.

Chapter 9 – Getting upstream is difficult but we add to the difficulty

"I don't see anyone right now in the UK who would have the vision to turn [upstream conflict prevention] into reality"
(Baroness Helic, 2019)

9.1 Introduction

This thesis began with a question: why did the Coalition government find it difficult to get upstream? Although the UK is only one actor in a complex international confederation of actors engaged in conflict prevention, this thesis provides insights into the difficulties experienced by a major international donor. The UK government is strategically well positioned in the UN and until recently within the EU. Yet, as a major actor the UK government found it difficult to play its part in getting upstream of conflict. The issues that are identified in this thesis have broader applicability to donors and situations beyond the policy implementation studies examined. Hence, this research has wider implications for the structural conflict prevention discourse than just understanding why the UK Coalition government had difficulties implementing its own stated intent.

This thesis identifies three key reasons why there was an inability to move further upstream as had been the clear political intent. First, UK politics prevented any strategic focus on the issue and upstream prevention never got the attention necessary to turn intent into a coherent government approach. Second, the UK government failed to get upstream related to the understanding (or misunderstanding) of what upstream conflict prevention was and how the UK could contribute to effective structural conflict prevention actions; structural conflict prevention was not differentiated from statebuilding. Finally, local conditions for UK officials within target countries were not created politically to deliver the desired ends.

This thesis has argued that, notwithstanding high-level political intent, upstream conflict prevention was neither followed through politically or technically nor executed effectively in the two policy implementation studies examined. Specifically, this thesis has examined the linkage between political intent, policy development and policy execution. It has found that the upstream pillar of policy was weak in its structural integrity from the outset and never really improved.

This chapter draws together the conclusions from the chapters, and in supporting the main findings above, addresses: the UK's strategic focus was elsewhere; upstream conflict prevention was too closely associated with statebuilding and normative policy could not be operationalised. The policy implementation studies evidenced these policy flaws. The chapter then presents the contribution to peacebuilding and conflict prevention literature. Finally, the chapter sets out the limitations of this research and areas for future research before providing a postscript on the implications of this research for policy development.

9.2 The UK's strategic focus was elsewhere

It is argued that UK politics prevented any strategic focus on the issue of upstream prevention. Consequently, upstream never got the attention necessary to turn intent into a coherent government approach. Even the presentation of the detail in the BSOS document says much about the thinking at the time with the "Investing in upstream prevention" pillar

being presented after "Early Warning" and "Rapid Crisis prevention and response". Logically "Investing in upstream prevention" should follow "Early Warning", with "Rapid Crisis prevention and response" being the last resort; this ordering says much about the way of thinking in departments and by politicians.

As a strategy, the Coalition government's BSOS resulted from an inter-departmental approach to documenting lessons and the emerging government intent. Signed off by three secretaries of state, this was a clear indication of the level of high-level consensus that the UK government had to do better across the three pillars of early warning, rapid response to crisis and upstream conflict prevention. BSOS did have impact and remains extant policy although there are indications that it lost its currency around 2013. While it remains extant policy, there is no evidence that the upstream pillar achieved any traction. Nor in the view of Baroness Helić (2019) is this likely in the current climate as there is no senior politician with the vision or the will to take forward structural conflict prevention with partners.

Political intent was not translated into effective policy; what emerged relating to structural upstream conflict prevention was normative and could not be operationalised. Lord Desai argued that the whole strategy was too idealistic. His was a lone voice of dissent in Parliamentary debates but his early assessment was broadly correct. Furthermore, recalling Dyer's comments[146] regarding strategy, and the views of Lord Rickett that the art of strategic thinking had been lost, it is argued that this lack of policy for conflict prevention is as much the result another factor. The very purpose of strategy, its content and use, was not well understood. This also would have contributed to a relatively short-sighted view of what might be construed as upstream, and hence why one sees little in the way of progress to the stated goal in BSOS. Again, there was a lack of clarity on the ends, so the ways and means were being pursued without having been integrated into a clear strategic approach that was not just the UK's but, related to the 2011 New Deal, in an approach that should have been jointly owned with the targeted local.

While BSOS focuses on the importance of political settlements, and a whole-of-government response, the reality was very different. This in turn led to a lack of commitment to any form of government direction in ends, ways and means. That is not to suggest that nothing happened. Officials, noting government intent, still sought to execute the intent at the local and country level; but this was in a form that relates more to best efforts of those directly involved in programmes and projects than a clear Whitehall strategic approach. Furthermore, there is a macro issue relating to strategy itself. Lord Ricketts (2019) suggested that the relentless pressure of modern 24/7 politics and media resulted in politicians focusing on short term issues and hampered their ability to think strategically. Bu in the context of upstream it requires politicians to have that long strategic view and direct policy and execution accordingly. It requires a higher degree of political consensus across the political spectrum if that strategic view is to be maintained beyond a parliament. If one accepts Rickett's views on the tyranny of the now, and he was well placed to make the observation, then it is unsurprising that with the interconnected digital world, and international events moving at a pace not imagined in days of strategic thinking of empire, Coalition government politicians and civil servants tended to be anchored to the "now", particularly with the Arab Spring.

[146] Policy DG DFID. See Chapter 1 - "… in my experience strategies are not read ... [and] quite often gets out of date quite quickly".

9.3 Upstream conflict prevention was too closely associated with statebuilding

Statebuilding is not the same as structural conflict prevention. At the beginning of this research my knowledge and experience tended to support a school of thought that, in line with the BSOS, placed the emphasis on institutions (people, infrastructure and processes) as the effective route to stability, statebuilding and hence the prevention of conflict. Policy evolved through lessons from experience, and departments place much effort and emphasis on the lessons learnt process. However, lessons tend to be from a technical (programmes and projects) perspective, and often from a post-conflict statebuilding agenda and not a pre- or post-conflict prevention agenda. The differences are subtle and the issue for policy development is one of understanding of the nature of structural conflict prevention.

It has been argued that the tools of structural conflict prevention are the same tools used for statebuilding. The BSOS emphasised a number of these tools for upstream focusing on institutions, security and justice. But a conflict prevention agenda uses these tools in a more subtle way, either in a positive/reinforcing or negative/cajoling/coercing way with the specific aim to encourage local elites to address potential drivers of conflict. Hence, a key difference between a statebuilding agenda and a structural conflict prevention agenda is that, in the latter, conflict prevention is not an outcome of statebuilding projects and programmes. Rather, in a conflict prevention agenda, the political process should have been a line of development itself, within a wider UK strategy, to assist a target state in stability, development and conflict prevention. As such the political process of structural conflict prevention, with its own goals and milestones, closely linked with other lines of development, needed to be owned and driven forward at an appropriate level by individuals with the standing and authority to deal effectively and with the target state elites.

9.4 Normative policy could not be operationalised

The normative nature of the policy that emerged during the Coalition government was not suitable for operationalisation by departments. Policy theory was used in this thesis to assist in the understanding of how policy had been developed; it also helped to focus on the implications of the way policy emerged. Considering the three main theories, there may well be scope for a rational, strategic approach to policy development using the joint inter-departmental analysis process (JACS) at a macro level; this might deliver a more coherent political and technical approach to issues. But, as seen in South Sudan the early approach to JACS was found to be flawed. Whether the use of JACS is now making a difference has not been addressed in this research. However, for a rational policy development approach to have any success there must be clarity of desired outcome. This was not forthcoming for upstream nor was there any real inter-departmental collective buy-in beyond the development of normative statements. Fundamentally, conflict prevention as a political process, within which the UK government is one actor seeking to influence other actors, is not well suited to a rational approach to policy development. However, as a donor the UK government provides funds and expertise to assist in the development of specific structures and capabilities at the micro societal or organisational level. While individual projects, particularly those associated with service or capability delivery, might benefit from a rational approach, at the macro level for politically driven conflict prevention a rational approach was not seen as an effective or even appropriate for the development of policy. It is unsurprising that there was little evidence of the rational approach.

At one point in the research, the lessons learned, incremental nature of the high-level policy that was emerging from departments in 2012 and 2013, following BSOS publication, seemed to have more in common with policy as symbolism[147] rather than policy that could be operationalised. Officials were seen to be responding to the political demands but without clarity on the way forward. Certainly, there is a degree of policy symbolism in that there appears to be a concerted effort to demonstrate the general direction of departmental travel but without any detail of how the real problems outlined in the BSOS were to be tackled. However, to argue that the policy efforts were only symbolism would be a harsh judgement on those involved.

An incremental approach clearly has merits for policy development in general; it has been widely successful at the technical level. However, for conflict prevention it is argued that it is only appropriate at the supporting project level and not for the development of policy and strategy relating to the ends, ways and means for engaging with the unique context of a partner state in order to assist in the political process of conflict prevention. Nonetheless, under the Coalition government, legitimacy of policy direction came from the UK's previous operational conflict prevention experience resulting from 20 years of experience of the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. There was also a realisation of the cost of intervention with limited positive outcomes compared to the original goals. With Hague, Mitchell and Fox seemingly driving the issue, it triggered within departments a degree of activity seeking new ideas typified by DFID's rapid response research task into conflict prevention and the various related policy documents. However, in Whitehall there was no clear focusing event that brought together the problems and workable policies that seized the political class in relation to upstream. In addition, as Baroness Helić and Lord Ricketts have indicated, the attention was elsewhere. The window of opportunity for the UK government to intervene successfully in upstream had passed. Even if the window of opportunity had remained open in South Sudan or opened up in Nepal with greater political focus, it is questionable that it would have made any difference. Technical solutions were offered whereas the problems, it is argued, were fundamentally political: both internally to the target states; and between UK and the target states in creating the conditions for departments and officials to conduct effective supporting programmes and projects.

9.5 The policy implementation studies evidenced the policy flaws

The focus of this research was on the process of policy development from the political intent through to execution. The policy implementation studies were selected to understand to what extent the political intent of BSOS was followed through with specific reference to a whole-of-government approach, with a commitment to working with partners, over an extended period of time, to contribute to structural conflict prevention, with an emphasis on institutions, security and justice.

Given the policy and strategic context outlined above, the policy implementation studies demonstrated the absence of clear political or operational goals as to how the UK government contributed to creating and maintaining the conditions for peace. One of the most important lessons emerging from South Sudan and Nepal, is that technical approaches

[147] See chapter 3; public officials respond to popular concerns with policies aimed at meeting demand for solutions rather than necessarily addressing the real problem.

will not succeed without substantive political engagement, pressure and ultimately local political intent by elites to address a conflict prevention agenda. Without this political engagement it is argued that technical – sometimes off-the-shelf templated – programmes and projects will struggle to have effect.

Reviewing both policy implementation studies, one is left with the impression of well-meaning, hard-working, dedicated officials and contractors whose efforts were not sufficiently well integrated into a clear joint UK-local strategic approach. But the pressure on project and programme managers to spend in order to play their part in the 0.7 per cent target played its part too. Officials became the classic street-level bureaucrats taking forward UK political intent by designing and implementing programmes. With this in mind, and reflecting on my own IMATT Sierra Leone's efforts, there is much that mirrored the approach that was undertaken in South Sudan. In Sierra Leone the SSR approach was clearly institutional capacity building, as it was in South Sudan. But in South Sudan there was a more urgent need to address internal conflict issues which were largely ignored.

In both policy implementation studies there was a clear commitment by officials to seek to improve governance and capacity in those states, but it also shows a tendency towards a high-risk strategy that was being played out with significant amounts of public funds with sometimes little real hope of sustainable effect. There was evidence in both policy implementation studies that UK government officials felt that they must do something; this resulted in the templating without the conditions created for success. The cost benefit or opportunity cost to taxpayers was forgotten given the size of aid budgets; but the comparisons of relatively small governance programmes in terms to the cost of a hospital ward or primary school inevitably brought press and political criticisms in a time of austerity in the UK. Policy transfer whether for statebuilding or structural conflict prevention purposes was not achieved to any degree commensurate with the resources and effort deployed.

There was a disconnect between political engagement and technical assistance. If there was to be a real commitment to getting in front of the cycle of violence, then the key should have been that the local must own that process – even if that required external political (or other e.g. economic) pressure. As noted above, the structural conflict prevention effort should have been political engagement led, but at the right level to have impact that would have created the conditions for technical assistance or delivery of capability that assists in conflict prevention. The notion that UK government officials, in the case of Nepal relatively junior, being able to bring enough pressure to bear is questionable as was demonstrated given the outcome of the policy implementation studies. Politicians and a whole-of-government approach at a sufficiently senior level that brings with it the right skills at the right strategic level (be that political, official, police or military) were required to create the conditions for UK staff to deliver effective technical advice, support or services.

It is assessed that departments, particularly the MOD, were not ready with an approach to try to affect the trajectory of internal tensions in South Sudan. The FCO was under-staffed due to the higher priorities in the Middle East but there is also the issue of the loss of in-depth knowledge and expertise. The MOD was consumed by Afghanistan and did not focus on South Sudan until after the withdrawal from military operations. But, in the absence of clear UK government priorities and direction, the effort of the MOD in South Sudan was fairly limited particularly once problems in Ukraine and tensions with Russia raised their profile. Hence, while there was a degree of high-level direction and initiative, it was unable

to be carried through at departmental level. DFID fell back primarily on their core programmes in which they probably felt most comfortable. Similar observations can be made in Nepal with the off-the-shelf templated approach to security and justice that was criticised by the ICAI. There were programmatic and structural issues associated with the DFID approach and multiple changes in staff/ambassador turnover in a relatively short time.

In complex and challenging political circumstances, relationships at the senior level are often key to allowing effective initiatives to develop between the respective staffs; this arguably was absent in both South Sudan and Nepal at the time. Indeed, what was happening in Nepal seems not to have been learning from the experience of the cancelled police reform programme. Perhaps this is not surprising given that these programmes were being run at a relatively junior level by staff who may not have had the experience of past SSR/police reform efforts. This was not helped by the absence of UK police or Stabilisation Unit involvement. In the Nepal policy implementation study, whether or not a better resourced approach, based on the past experience of policing reform and building on the 2007 police transformation report produced for the Nepali government, would have made any difference is a counterfactual question. What is clear is that, as presented, the UK government's efforts at supporting Nepali police and justice transformation struggled from the outset and the local officials were muddling through the best they could.

9.6 Contribution to the literature on conflict prevention

The contribution to the literature on structural conflict prevention is in three respects: a view on the nature of structural conflict prevention; building on the conceptual literature, a unique view at the conceptual/policy design level of the attempt in the UK to translate political intent into policy and then action; and insights into what happens when there is an absence of clear political engagement, prioritisation and direction.

At the beginning of this research it was immediately apparent that the concept of upstream was unhelpful in providing a clear understanding of the goal of strategy. But conflict prevention as a term was also ill-defined. The OECD had usefully provided a breakdown between operational and structural conflict prevention that easily mapped onto the BSOS rapid response and upstream. However, a clear definition was required for this thesis and, initially, a definition provided by Pérez-Niño and Walton was used. However, over time this definition was found to be too focused on the technical. Hence for the purposes of this research it was modified and is offered as a more accurate presentation of the actions that a donor might conduct in order to assist, support or deliver actions to prevent violent conflict. The key change is noting that conflict prevention is a process and that process is driven by politics. Furthermore, the technical approach, largely adopted by DFID and the UK government, that focuses on programmes and projects, largely executed through INGOs/NGOs, is a supporting approach to the fundamental political process that must be owned by local actors. That definition is:

> … conflict prevention is a process, ideally locally owned in line with the principles of the 2011 New Deal, in which the international community partners can contribute, through politically driven strategies and policies at the macro-level, and activities and projects at the micro-level, to prevent the outbreak, escalation or relapse of large-scale violent conflict between or within states. It includes long-term and short-term actions that aim to address the underlying causes of violence or its more immediate triggers.

Having a clearer view of conflict prevention was a start point that then led to a better understanding of the UK process of turning political intent as expressed in BSOS into action. It was in this respect, building on the conceptual frameworks of previous research, that this research sought to track how the UK government and its departments then translated the political intent into action. Despite previous conceptual research into conflict prevention, this research demonstrated the impact of a lack of political direction on an area of policy that had not been previously embedded into departmental policy. The signposts for a way forward for structural conflict prevention were well documented, in the previous conceptual literature through the work of Lund, Ramsbotham et al. and Zartman (Lund, 2009, Lund, 2003, Ramsbotham et al., 2018, Zartman, 2015). Others had addressed the issues for operationalising policy with specific reference to sovereignty, power and patronage and settlements (Brown, 2007, Bickerton et al., 2007, Sending, 2011, Higley and Burton, 1998, McGarry and O'Leary, 2006, Ingram, 2014). Much of the previous work had tended to be somewhat focused on technocratic processes. However, notwithstanding previous research, by tracking parliamentary statements, reports and departmental policy development this research was able to identify how the upstream pillar failed to gain traction in government and departmental policy development and plans. This was a failure of politics due to understandable pressures of the time.

Noting the lack of prior operational lessons, or academic research of operationalising conflict prevention policy, this research did identify the overlap between structural conflict prevention and statebuilding. Again, drawing on the statebuilding literature, with specific reference to politics, interventions, democracy and statebuilding this research identified a key difference that impacts structural conflict prevention as opposed to statebuilding; that of the political motivations of the donor and local partner. By looking at what happened in South Sudan and Nepal, this research examined the impact of the efforts of the UK's street-level bureaucrats, working in a vacuum of UK political prioritisation and engagement, as they struggled to interpret government intent, and thus design and develop policy and plans and then execute programmes and projects at the local. While there might be some success in statebuilding, this does not necessarily translate to structural conflict prevention. The key identified in this research is the willingness of the local (or having been pressured to do so) to address its own issues and hence the role that donors might play in helping to create the conditions by which violence would be prevented. But, as demonstrated in this research, and has been highlighted in previous academic work (Leftwich, 1996, Woodward, 2017, Mac Ginty, 2016), this is fundamentally an elite political process in which street-level bureaucrats are not necessarily well placed to engage.

Returning to the relationship between conflict prevention and policy development under the Coalition government, policy theory, and specifically the indicators listed in Table 3.2, provided a framework to better understand how structural conflict prevention policy was emerging; this in turn gave indications of the likely implications of government and departmental structural conflict prevention actions. Throughout this research being able to identify the extent to which policy was being made rationally, incrementally or whether there was a coalescence of policy ideas, politics and events has been fundamental to understanding what was happening and why. Drawing on the indicators of policy theory, this research has demonstrated the impact of a failure to link political intent with effective policy development and policy execution. Implementing a practical usage of policy theory, it has been possible to demonstrate that the default approach to policy development in international development, incrementalism and muddling through, was likely to fail as a response to conflict prevention;

there was no prior experience to build upon and the UK government response was broadly technical to a fundamentally political process.

Drawing on policy theory this thesis examined the development of Coalition government (2010–2015) upstream policy, reaction to it in Parliament and elsewhere, and how it was subsequently executed by officials in two policy implementation studies. This thesis finds that the Coalition government's BSOS, while well received in all quarters, was not strategy but political intent; it was more inward facing rather than focused on priorities for UK government assistance. The upstream pillar did not get translated into effective policy and so efforts by departments and officials continued much as before – best efforts by officials where there was felt to be a need and an opportunity to execute projects. There is no evidence of any significant increase in upstream resources although the understanding of what was upstream might result in different views being taken. However, there was a more fundamental flaw in the subsequent approach stemming from the tyranny of the immediate which impacted any coherent government led focus on effective upstream interventions. In the two policy implementation studies there was evidence of an absence of good departmental policy and strategy, coupled with a tendency to use templated off-the-shelf project solutions.

This thesis finds that conflict prevention is a political process that is underpinned by good supporting technical programmes and projects. Drawing on the theoretical indicators, it is more about (political) leadership and requires the will and desire of local leadership. This is also reflected in the very principles of the New Deal being locally led. Hence, policy responses to conflict prevention were conceptually understood, at a macro level, but not operationalised. Partnership in the political process of transformation is paramount. Relying just on technical programme approaches, which have the potential to deliver lower-level capabilities and change, have been shown to be of limited success and lacking in sustainability at delivering the strategic conflict prevention transformation required. The process of bringing together problems, coalitions and policies that address both political and technical needs offers the best way forward as an approach for conflict prevention. That this approach also requires a window of opportunity and a coalescing event accounts for some of the challenges experienced over the years by the international community in getting upstream. That the BSOS, and senior stakeholders, did not recognise the need to bring together problems, coalitions and both political and technical policies accounted for much of the failure of the BSOS upstream goal to be realised. Getting upstream is likely to remain challenging for the international community. If it is attempted, then it should be with a clear understanding that politics must lead with local elites and that technical approaches are in support of any political dialogue.

9.7 Limitations and areas for further research

In the course of this work, a number of issues emerged that were either outside of the scope of the research or required further research in addition to that which was covered. The main issues relating to the Coalition government's stability strategy and focuses on timing and government strategic analysis and response. In addition, there were questions emerging relating to the effectiveness of soft power and interlocutors.

With regard to the BSOS itself, one of the pillars of BSOS was early warning. But the question remains as to whether the warning time being given to politicians and departments is sufficient for politicians and officials to be seized by the potential of a pending crisis, and

then to be motivated to act. This would then require time to develop an approach with other donors and with local elites to address structural upstream conflict prevention actions. If the warning time is insufficient, particularly given the tyranny of the immediate, for structural conflict prevention this perhaps indicates a requirement for a very different state-to-state partnering between elites and officials that work together strategically, and over a long timeframe, to address the drivers of conflict both. Perhaps this is too fanciful a concept; given the pressures on government, it is likely that often the UK government will find itself addressing issues at the point of crisis. This would be a very negative approach to the worthwhile goal of getting upstream of large-scale violence. But to get upstream does require a better understanding of the political process and further study of the successes and failures at the politico-strategic level. Better understanding of the timing and sequencing of prevention diplomacy supported by technical programmes may offer officials and ministers clear options as to how to intervene and at what point a whole-of-government approach is most appropriate. Related to these questions is an assessment of how the joint analysis system is working across the UK government and whether upstream policy has advanced more than has been indicated in this thesis.

Preventative diplomacy (sometimes described as soft power) has been touched on within this thesis, but it has been acknowledged that in this research it has not been fully understood. A limitation has been the ability to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of preventative diplomacy through private one-to-one interactions by UK officials; this would have required a far greater access to officials than was achieved. This also leads into a related issue of interlocutors, not necessarily from the UK, who are able to work with both donors and local elites, and importantly move around and through difficult moral issues that at times tie the hands of UK politicians and officials. But again, more work is required on the ways and means used by interlocutors, at an early stage of political and social conflict, to assess where and when such efforts have played a part in reducing the risk of large-scale violence.

9.8 A postscript: implications for policy

As with the authors and signatories of the BSOS, when I began this research, uppermost in my mind were thoughts and views about the operationalisation of governance, security, justice and institution building. However, the research journey has led me to focus much more on the role of politics, politicians and influential interlocutors. These individuals do more than just create the conditions for officials to execute their supporting programmes. They are fundamental to influencing elites in those states at risk of widespread violence to think and act differently to address the drivers of conflict.

The Coalition government's BSOS policy emerged after a generation of politicians and officials had experienced the shortfalls, costs and limitations of past stabilisation interventions. The Coalition government's approach to structural conflict prevention was broad and general, leaving it to departments and officials to take forward the strategy; this did not work. Indeed, there are dangers in seeing structural conflict prevention as a discrete policy area of political endeavour; there is a risk that such an approach will continue to be pushed onto the back burner as the tyranny of the immediate holds the attention of political leaders and senior officials. But it does not have to be that way. However, one must wonder if a similar window of opportunity is likely to open again to bring focus on structural conflict prevention in the same way.

There are other approaches that might be considered. The UK aid budget in recent years has been focused more on those states that are seen to be fragile. There is also a wider understanding that middle-income states are also at risk of political fragility and whose societies can descend into violent conflict. This has implications for a wide range of government policies. Hence, rather than the general all-encompassing approach to structural conflict prevention as adopted by the Coalition government, a more focused approach would be to embed structural conflict prevention as part of a wider approach to other policies and strategies where there is a high risk of violent conflict. This could be done as a clear line of development within a strategy for a specific problem or region; for example, when addressing the risks associated with conflict and climate change. Such an approach would draw attention to the political as well as the technical actions that would be required. The political line of development for conflict prevention would best be owned by those politicians, senior civil servants or interlocutors best placed to influence the actions of elites within a target state, society or region. But, to do this requires politicians and policy developers and those tasked with execution planning to think strategically and note the long-term political nature of the *process* of structural conflict prevention and plan accordingly.

Furthermore, when developing detailed strategies, policy makers, and those responsible for the execution of policy, must be clear on the subtle difference between structural conflict prevention and statebuilding. In this respect more attention should be given to the strategic lessons of why it has been difficult to get upstream in the past, rather than a concentration on policy development based on the lessons of programmes and projects. Donor state elites, or interlocutors, must develop sustainable and effective political approaches to influence elites and societies in those states at risk of violence to act in a way that reduces tensions and addresses issues. In doing so the conditions must be created for any technical supporting activities (e.g. projects aimed at governance, institutions, security and justice) that seek to mitigate the underlying drivers of conflict. Then the UK government and its agents, along with the wider donor community, acting politically and technically, have a chance at contributing positively and effectively to the prevention of large-scale violence.

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Annex A

Government and International Policy Documents

Table A.1 – UK Government and Departmental Policy Documents 2010–2015

Year	Documents	Source	Comment
2010	Building peaceful states and societies	DFID	A practice paper hence more doctrine than policy
	Human Rights and Democracy Report	FCO	
	National Security Strategy	HMG	
2011	Bilateral Aid Review	DFID	
	Building Stability Overseas Strategy	FCO; DFID; MOD	
	Human Rights and Democracy Report	FCO	
	Multilateral Aid Review	DFID	
	UK aid: Changing lives, delivering results	DFID	
2012	Balkans	FCO; DFID; MOD	Note 1
	Commonwealth	FCO; DFID	Note 1
	Preventing Conflict in Fragile States	FCO; MOD; DFID	Note 1
	Countering Weapons Proliferation	FCO; DB,I&S; DFID; DE&CC; MOD	
	Establishing Stability in Afghanistan	CO; FCO; MOD;DFID	
	Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict Affected States: DRC and Rwanda: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2010-12	HMG	HC1872
	Human Rights and Democracy Report	FCO; Government Equalities Office; D for C,M&S	Note 1
	Controlling defence, security and dual-use strategic exports	DBI&S; DFID	Note 1
	MOD Piracy	MOD, FCO	Note 1
	National Action Plan Women Revised	DFID	
	Peace in M East and N Africa	FCO; DFID; MOD	Note 1
	Protecting UK Against Terrorism	HO; FCO; CO; MofJ	Note 1
	South Sudan: Prospects for Peace and Development: Government Response	HMG	HC 426
	Trade Barriers	DB,I&S; DFID	Note 1
2013	Helping developing countries to be better- run and more accountable	DFID	Note 1
	DfID Increasing Aid Effectiveness Policy	DFID	Note 1
	Conflict Pool Strategic Guidance	FCO, DFID, MOD	
	Helping developing countries' economies to grow	DFID	Note 1
	Making sure children in developing countries get a good education	DFID	
	Improving the health of poor people in developing countries	DFID	Note 1
	Helping developing countries deal with humanitarian emergencies	DFID	Note 1
	Human Rights and Democracy Report	FCO	
	ICC Strategy Final	FCO	
	International Defence Engagement Strategy	MOD	
	Reducing the impact of climate change in developing countries	DFID; DE&CC; FCO	Note 1
	Improving the lives of girls and women in the world's poorest countries	DFID	Note 1
	Making UK aid more open and transparent	DFID	Note 1
	Reducing hunger and malnutrition in developing countries	DFID	Note 1
	Providing clean water and sanitation in developing countries	DFID	Note 1
2014	Defence Committee Intervention Government Response	MOD	
	Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict	FCO, DFID, Cabinet Office	
	OSJA Guidance		

Year	Documents	Source	Comment
2015	UK aid tackling global challenges	Conservative Government Treasury/DFID	

Notes:

1. Some policy documents captured on the web in 2014/15 were later found to be removed, or updated, by the subsequent Conservative government when access was attempted in 2016 for analysis. Documents found in 2014/15 were captured as PDF documents at the time and therefore have been imported into Nvivo for analysis as they remain legitimate sources of data for the period of the Coalition government.

Table A.2 – International benchmarks and agreements

Organization	Document	Remarks
OECD	The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) (OECD, 2008)	With specific reference to fragile states)
OECD	Principle for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations (OECD, 2007)	
OECD/IDPS/g7+	Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals developed under the Dili Declaration (IDPS, 2010a)	
Council of Europe	Conclusions on Conflict Prevention (Council of the European Union, 2011)	
g7+	New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States (g7+, 2011b)	
NATO	Political Guidance on ways to improve NATO's involvement in Stabilisation and Reconstruction (NATO, 2011)	
IDPS	Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Indicators – Progress, Interim List and Next Steps (IDPS, 2013)	Note that this was a discussion document.
European Commission	Joint Communication To the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committees of the Regions (European Commission, 2014)	
UN	Arms Trade Treaty (UN, 2014)	
UN and World Bank	Pathways for peace: inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict (World Bank and United Nations, 2018)	

Annex B

Methodology – Policy analysis, use of Nvivo and interviews

1 Introduction

This annex provides more detail on two aspects of the methodology: the use of Nvivo; and the approach taken to interviews.

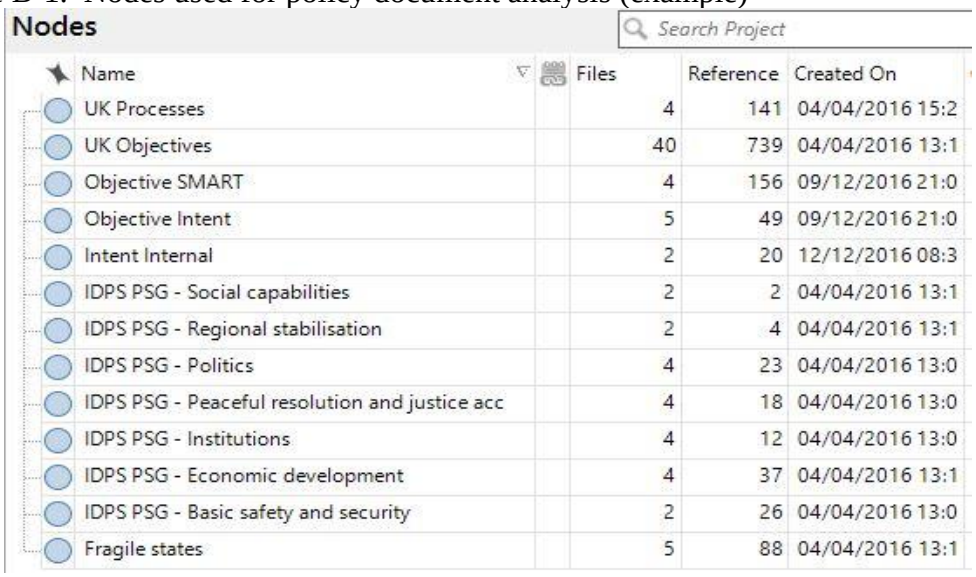
2 Nvivo

As described in Chapter 3, the documents listed at Annex A were sourced by trawling through government and government department websites and the material identified was captured in pdf documents and downloaded into the Endnote library. The next task was to assess the extent to which the policy documents provided policy direction for upstream conflict prevention. A sift of the documents identified produced a list of documents that were of particular interest to the research; these documents were then imported into Nvivo. Different Nvivo files were established for the various tasks covering policy, Hansard statements and the two implementation studies.

2.2 Analysing policy documents

The policy analysis was a combination of documentary discourse analysis supported by some quantitative data analysis using Nvivo. Initially, each document was coded to identify subjects and phrases of interest. Nodes were set up to categorise the identified statements that provide evidence of Government and departmental objectives; attention to any SMART[148] objectives. Note was also be taken of normative policy statements that do not imply any action or guidance but express best practice without any inferred action. An example of the nodes used for government policy analysis is at Figure B-1.

Figure B-1. Nodes used for policy document analysis (example)



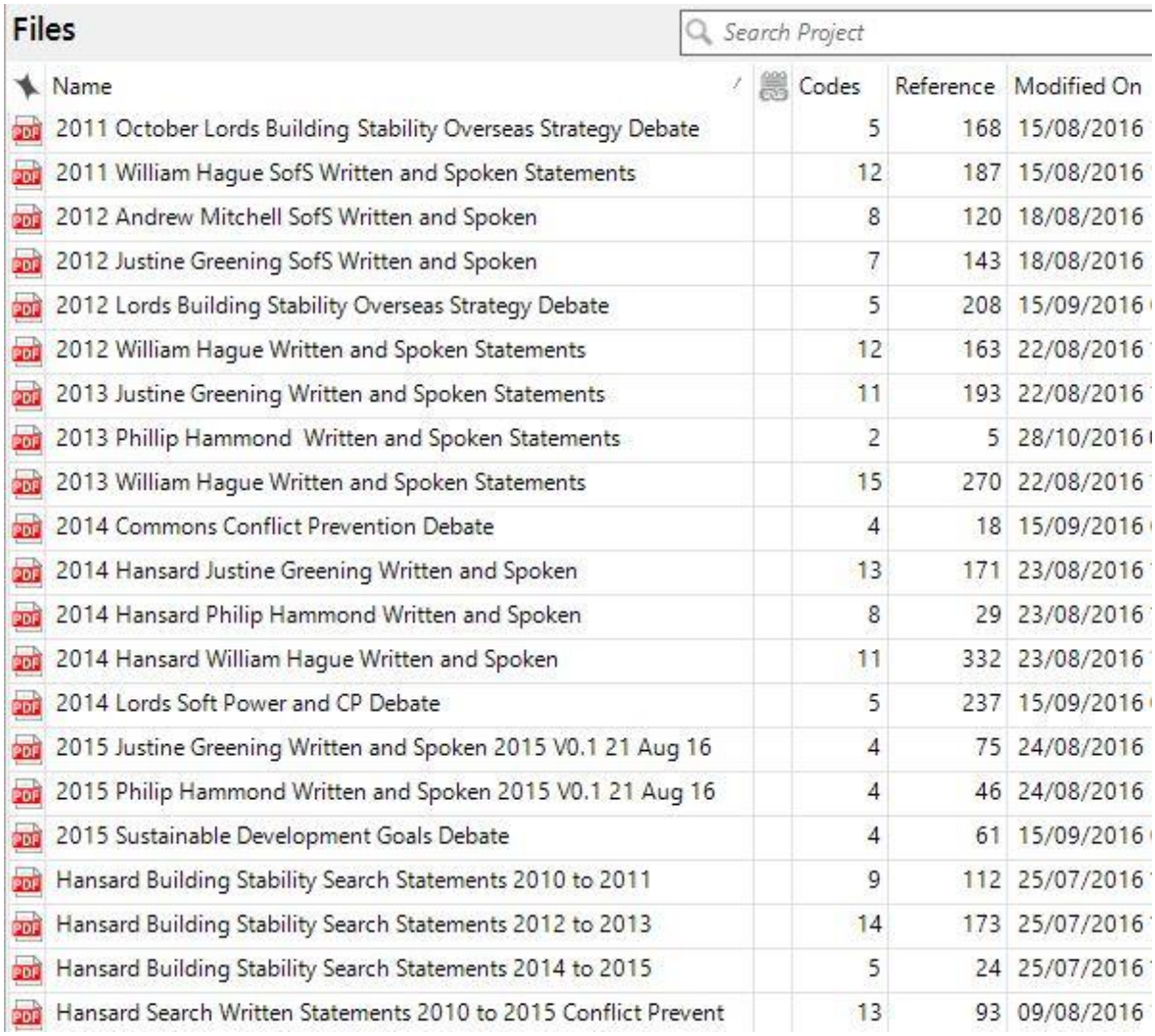
Name	Files	Reference	Created On
UK Processes	4	141	04/04/2016 15:2
UK Objectives	40	739	04/04/2016 13:1
Objective SMART	4	156	09/12/2016 21:0
Objective Intent	5	49	09/12/2016 21:0
Intent Internal	2	20	12/12/2016 08:3
IDPS PSG - Social capabilities	2	2	04/04/2016 13:1
IDPS PSG - Regional stabilisation	2	4	04/04/2016 13:1
IDPS PSG - Politics	4	23	04/04/2016 13:0
IDPS PSG - Peaceful resolution and justice acc	4	18	04/04/2016 13:0
IDPS PSG - Institutions	4	12	04/04/2016 13:0
IDPS PSG - Economic development	4	37	04/04/2016 13:1
IDPS PSG - Basic safety and security	2	26	04/04/2016 13:0
Fragile states	5	88	04/04/2016 13:1

[148] SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

2.3 Analysing Hansard statements

The same process was undertaken for the Hansard written statements and speeches. The information was drawn from the list of documents listed in Figure B-2. As the aim was to understand how the story of the policy developed over time in Parliament the nodes used were by month/year. Reports were produced and analysed resulting in information being included into the chapters as required.

Figure B-2. Hansard documents analysed using Nvivo



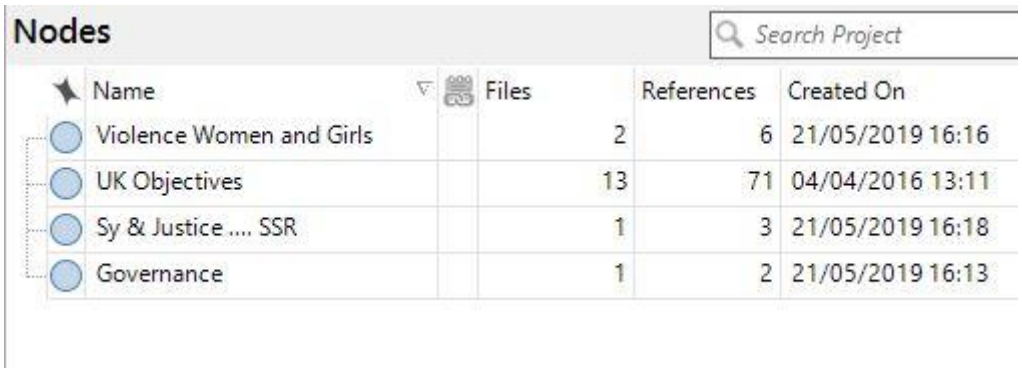
Files — Search Project

Name	Codes	Reference	Modified On
2011 October Lords Building Stability Overseas Strategy Debate	5	168	15/08/2016
2011 William Hague SofS Written and Spoken Statements	12	187	15/08/2016
2012 Andrew Mitchell SofS Written and Spoken	8	120	18/08/2016
2012 Justine Greening SofS Written and Spoken	7	143	18/08/2016
2012 Lords Building Stability Overseas Strategy Debate	5	208	15/09/2016
2012 William Hague Written and Spoken Statements	12	163	22/08/2016
2013 Justine Greening Written and Spoken Statements	11	193	22/08/2016
2013 Phillip Hammond Written and Spoken Statements	2	5	28/10/2016
2013 William Hague Written and Spoken Statements	15	270	22/08/2016
2014 Commons Conflict Prevention Debate	4	18	15/09/2016
2014 Hansard Justine Greening Written and Spoken	13	171	23/08/2016
2014 Hansard Philip Hammond Written and Spoken	8	29	23/08/2016
2014 Hansard William Hague Written and Spoken	11	332	23/08/2016
2014 Lords Soft Power and CP Debate	5	237	15/09/2016
2015 Justine Greening Written and Spoken 2015 V0.1 21 Aug 16	4	75	24/08/2016
2015 Philip Hammond Written and Spoken 2015 V0.1 21 Aug 16	4	46	24/08/2016
2015 Sustainable Development Goals Debate	4	61	15/09/2016
Hansard Building Stability Search Statements 2010 to 2011	9	112	25/07/2016
Hansard Building Stability Search Statements 2012 to 2013	14	173	25/07/2016
Hansard Building Stability Search Statements 2014 to 2015	5	24	25/07/2016
Hansard Search Written Statements 2010 to 2015 Conflict Prevent	13	93	09/08/2016

2.4 Analysing policy for the implementation studies

The third use of the document analysis related to the implementation studies. From the Endnote library documents of interest were identified and imported into Nvivo for coding; the coding used is included at Figure B-3. The aim was to cover the key themes identified by the Coalition government for action in the upstream pillar of BSOS. Again, reports were produced from the Nvivo search, and useful information incorporated into the chapters as appropriate.

Figure B-3. Country implemetation study coding nodes.



3 Interviews

This section describes the interview management process and how interviews supported the research streams. Interview can be divided into four groups and were differentiated by time and target interviewees. At the early phase of the research there was a focus on academics involved in conflict prevention. This aided the focusing of the whole research project. The next two groups of interviews were aimed at those involved in policy development (informing Chapters 4 and 5) and those involved in South Sudan and Nepal (Chapters 6 and 7). Finally, with Chapters 4 to 7 in draft form, the focus of attention switched to senior stakeholders (politicians and civil servants) involved in policy setting; the output then informed Chapters 5, 8 and 9 in particular. The interview engagement plan and the master question list are covered below.

3.1 Interview plan

In the early stages of research as source documents were being gathered so an Interview Engagement Plan and an Information and Consent document were developed. This plan began with institutions/target groups and then sought to identify individuals and then contact details. The main groups were politicians, government officials and NGOs/consultants/academics. There was a degree of success with most of the groups although two areas stand out where it was difficult to achieve engagement: senior UK serving civil servants; and senior local officials in South Sudan and Nepal. Approaches were normally by email letter although letters were also used to generic organisations where personal addresses were not identified (this latter approach did result in some useful contacts). The Consent form is at Annex C.

3.2 Interview management

Interviews were targeting different groups of individuals, at different levels of seniority within their organisations, and with different involvement in the policy development and implementation process. Despite this wide breadth of potential interviewees an Interview Master Question list was developed early in the research which was then adjusted to meet the needs of a specific interview. The table of generic questions focused on three areas of research: policy content; policy analysis and implementation reflecting the overall approach of the research and mirroring the secondary questions set out in Chapter 3.

Table B-1. Extract – Interview Master Question list and secondary research questions

Research Area	Secondary Questions
Policy Content	• How does UK policy define conflict prevention? • How does UK policy articulate its proposed actions for conflict prevention and in particular structural conflict prevention? • How does policy provide direction to policy execution? • How have interpretations of upstream, 'conflict prevention' and 'fragile states' been interpreted across Whitehall in departmental policy statements?
Policy Analysis	• Drawing from Coalition Government policy is it possible to construct a coherent structural conflict prevention policy or strategy? • To what extent is UK policy increasing effort towards structural conflict prevention? • To what extent is UK policy drawing on the identified policy leavers to affect conflict prevention? • What gaps can be identified in UK policy? • What is the evidence that UK policy created the conditions for policy execution? • How has UK national security impacted policy and programme development? • How has risk appetite in Whitehall impacted policy development? • How has a whole-of-government approach impacted structural conflict prevention? • What theoretical policy models best explains the policy development process? • Has identifying the models of development provided an indication of policy outcome? • How have international frameworks informed policy? • How have interpretations of upstream, 'conflict prevention' and 'fragile states' been interpreted across Whitehall in departmental policy statements? • How has past experience influenced policy development? • How has Whitehall politics (inter-departmental competition) impacted policy development? • Have immediate crises response actions been privileged over structural prevention?
Policy Execution	• To what extent does macro policy objectives reflect micro implementation programmes and plans? • Have immediate crises response actions been privileged over structural prevention? • How has Whitehall politics (inter-departmental relations) impacted policy execution at country level programmes? • How has whole of government been applied to CP actions? How has UK leveraged its position within IOs or with other donors to benefit its objectives? • How have international frameworks informed policy execution? • Are cross-departmental efforts led effectively? • How is risk appetite affected by EPM/VFM, among others? How is risk affected by inter-departmental working? How risk-averse are civil servants and politicians? Who is driving the risk agenda in Whitehall? • How do regional/country strategies (i.e. medium to long term objectives/goals) shape programmes and projects? What are the key drivers; process or politics? How does this translate into action? • How have these issues impacted UK's action in priority countries for transformational change and upstream conflict prevention? • How does UK policy contribute to medium to longer term resilience and sustainability or is policy execution buffeted by more contingent political demands?

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Consent Form

Post Graduate Research Project

BUILDING STABILITY OVERSEAS: WHY IS GETTING UPSTREAM DIFFICULT? – AN EXAMINATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT POLICY (2010-2015)

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research project undertaken for the qualification of PhD at the University of Bath. You are being asked to participate because of your experience and expertise in the subject matter. This project has been approved by the University of Bath Department of Social and Policy Science.

Project Summary

This project aims to understand whether, under the Coalition Government of 2010-2015, there was a major advance in UK's conflict prevention policy as claimed. The project seeks to understand how the policy evolved and how it relates to policy theory. Specifically, the project seeks to understand whether conflict prevention policy created the conditions for a coherent, whole of government approach and whether this was achieved in policy execution. The focus of attention is on structural conflict prevention (i.e. longer term activities to prevent violent conflict), with case studies on UK's involvement in South Sudan and Kenya (and/or Nepal).

[redacted]

Colonel Andrew Johnstone
PhD Candidate

Doctor Oliver Walton
Primary Supervisor

Professor Graham Room
Second Supervisor

Project Outcomes

The final report, including data collected from interviewees, will be published as a monograph. Data will be used for the final thesis submission, and may be used for other research outputs.

Disclosure of Interest

This research is undertaken as a doctoral research project at the University of Bath and is self-funded.

Nature of Participation

Participation in this study will take the form of a one-to-one interview with the researcher. During this interview you will be asked to discuss your experiences and views on the subject matter in response to questions posed by the researcher. The interview will be audio taped, using a Dictaphone, in order to ensure the information provided is recorded accurately. The researcher may also take note during the interview. Participation is voluntary, and you will have the right to withdraw at any point without cause or consequence.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Consent Form

Confidentiality

Information provided, including interview tapes and transcripts, will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them, except as may be required by law. Transcription will be conducted by the researcher. Your participation will not be disclosed to third parties (unless required by law) or supervisors without your consent.

Anonymity

Anonymous Participation	Where anonymity is requested or data provided under the Chatham House Rule, interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name. Instead, your data will be referred to by a generalised form of your position or role. Quotations may be used but not attributed in name.
On-record Participation	Interview data provided during on-the-record interviews, will not be held or referred to anonymously, and may be used in attributed quotation or otherwise associated with your name and position. The fact of your participation will not be considered confidential, but personal contact details etc. will remain confidential.

Data Security

Data will be held in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 for up to three years after completion of the project, to enable publication. It will then be destroyed. All non-anonymised data will be securely stored in accordance with the Act. Additionally, all non-anonymised electronic files will be password protected.

Contact Details

For further information about the research project or your interview data, please contact:

Colonel Andrew Johnstone	Social & Policy Studies, University of Bath, Bath, BA2 7AY Email: ahj31@bath.ac.uk Tel (Via): +44 (0)1225 38 3049

If you have concerns or questions you would like to discuss with someone else, please contact:

Dr Oliver Walton	Social & Policy Studies, University of Bath, Bath, BA2 7AY Email: o.e.walton@bath.ac.uk Tel: +44 (0) 1225 38 6137

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Consent Form

PhD Research Project

BUILDING STABILITY OVERSEAS: WHY IS GETTING UPSTREAM DIFFICULT? – AN EXAMINATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT POLICY (2010-2015)

Consent

If you are participating, please select the boxes below and indicate the nature of your participation, before signing and dating the form.

☐	I understand the information contained within the Project Information Sheet, and have had the opportunity to ask any questions.
☐	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project, and consent to the use of my information in accordance with the details specified in the Project Information Sheet.
☐	I consent to being interviewed by the researcher, and to that interview being audio recorded using a Dictaphone as outlined in the Project Information Sheet.
☐	I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any point before the research project is completed, including subsequent to being interviewed.
☐	I understand that this is an UNCLASSIFIED study, and that no information should be made available to the research project of a legally protected nature.

I WISH TO PARTICIPATE: ANONYMOUSLY / ON THE RECORD

(delete as appropriate)

Name of Participant:	
Position and title	
Date	
Participant's Signature	
Interviewer's Signature	